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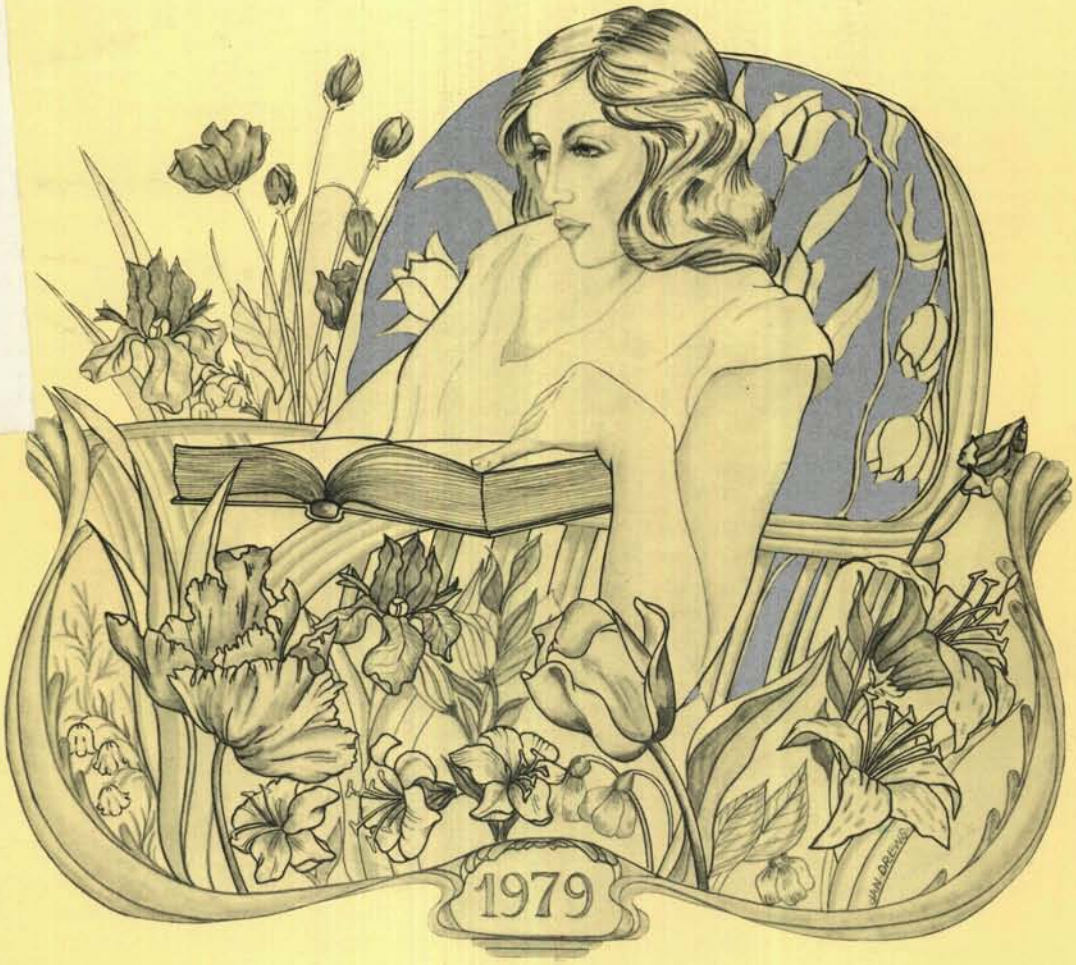

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TRB

from Washington
March 10, 1979

The Whirligig of Time

We turned the TV on at supper the other night, and watched some pictures of Jupiter, broadcast from the Explorer satellite. They were the first ever taken that close, a couple of million miles away, I think the man said. It was like a big pie-plate. You saw the side of it, circling round, with streams of gas going across it, and a couple of moons underneath, and firestorms sweeping across its whirling face, and all conveyed to us somehow across the solar system, and shown with the right note of awe while we went on with our chicken and noodles. Then, after that, we got another interesting piece, about a couple of teenagers who had hired a third party for $60 (I think it was) to kill their father, or so it was alleged. And after that came some rather fuzzy pictures of the war going on in Vietnam from the Chinese army side, and you actually heard the thump of the incoming shells as they landed near you. Only the pictures were out of focus and not up to professional standard.

For a reporter who grew up in a simpler world (we used to fill our fountain pens with a medicine dropper) this is all rather unnerving. The rate of progress has accelerated. First came the steel pen; then the fountain pen; then somebody invented the pen with an inner tube that sucked up its own fluid; and after that today's ball point. Now reporters sometimes just take along a tape recorder and need no pen at all.

It is hard to grasp. On April 7, 1927, Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover came over to the telephone headquarters in Washington and helped demonstrate a new marvel. He talked into a tall telephone while sitting before a box with a scanning light inside, and his voice and image were projected all the way to New York, 220 miles away. Pretty soon Walter S. Gifford, a stern, moustached man, head of AT&T, appeared on the glass screen, as large as a playing card. He was speaking from Whippany, New Jersey, and after they had said "hello" a couple of times they ran out of conversation. The scene was switched to somewhere else and an actor put on a vaudeville act.

If you lived back in those days that was enough excitement to last you for a long time. The *New York Times* put it in column one, front page: "Far-Off Speakers Seen As Well as Heard Here In a Test of Television." The subheadlines continued to tell of the exploit but included one caution: "Commercial Use In Doubt."

Mr. Hoover told the press he did not want the new invention exploited for selfish ends. Those were simpler days. As president, Hoover carried on an old 19th-century custom of greeting any adequately clothed stranger on New Year's day on the White House reception line.

I recently visited the Boeing airplane plant at Seattle where they turn out Boeing 747s that carry 363 passengers and are 231 feet long. That is longer than the first flight on Kill Devil Hill which carried only one passenger, Orville Wright.

Things are bigger and faster now. Particularly in the past few weeks Americans have gotten a sense of impotency. We want Jimmy Carter to be our surrogate and to take charge, but he is exasperatingly mild. No shouts, no anger, no hysteria, but irritating patience. He is still trying to get a Middle East settlement and persuaded Begin to come over again. It is hard on American nerves. There's a war in Vietnam and we're not in it—surely there's something wrong here. In Mexico he didn't talk back when Portillo lectured him. When guerrillas kidnapped the young US soldier from the hospital in Iran, a tough president would have exploded; he would have sent in the Marines, or a battleship, or dropped a bomb. Who cares about their oil? But Carter negotiated behind the scenes and got the boy free. The flock of GOP presidential hopefuls have been uttering their discordant starling cries of protest ever since.

Michigan's Republican governor, William Millikin, was in town last week at the Governors' Conference and seemed as attractive a state executive as I have met in a long time. It was startling though, to hear him praise President Carter.

An air of unreality covers much that we watch on television. Senator Howard Baker, Republican of Tennessee, said in a recent interview that he thought foreign policy would be a major issue in the 1980 election. He went on to discuss nuclear war in the jargon that is almost impossible for the average person to visualize. "We cannot be certain that we can obliterate their [the Russians'] ability to strike us in a second wave of missiles. . . . Now we have one thing left and that would be to destroy their population." Baker said he supposed that "is still a deterrent," which seems a reasonable conclusion; but he added doubts: "It seems vaguely disquieting to me that the deterrent policy of the US should be based on destroying people instead of destroying their missile systems."

What a world. Take me back to the hand-filled fountain pens. "I am not sure," Baker concluded, "that America's foreign policy ought to depend on our ability to incinerate 151 million Russians."

It does give you pause, doesn't it? Also of being incinerated in turn by Russians. But I fear the chance of getting a two-thirds majority for the SALT II insurance policy is not very good.

Notes: There's a growing feeling that America will end 1979 in a recession; that unemployment will rise at least a million; that this will end talk of constitutional restrictions on spending, which nobody takes very seriously anyway. . . . Democrats hope the GOP will "do another 1964," that is, name a hardline conservative like Goldwater, who lost to LBJ by 15.5 million. . . . Favorite Democratic candidates are Reagan and Connally; more likely it will be a middle-roader, though Carter has grabbed that position.

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Correspondence

Health insurance for federal employees

To the editors:

In his article "The New Feudalism" (*TNR*, January 20) Eliot Marshall states, "Yet people inside an economic fortress like the US Civil Service have their health insurance paid for by the taxpayer." This is incorrect. Federal employees contribute substantially to the cost of their health insurance. In a recent survey *U.S. News & World Report* found that, "In insurance benefits . . . Federal employees generally lag behind their private counterparts" and that "large companies typically offer better health plans."

While the above does not detract from Mr. Marshall's thesis I do not believe the statement should go uncorrected. Much current criticism of the US Civil Service is stimulated by inaccurate or misleading material appearing in the press. Neither the Civil Service nor the public are well served thereby.

Joel M. Johanson
Port Townsend, Washington

A custom more honored in the breach . . .

To the editors:

"The Great Savings Swindle" (*TNR*, February 17) contains a common and revealing error, one which I've noticed many times but never in a publication I truly respect. In speaking of the "hallowed" American virtue of thrift, the writer notes that "Like many treasured ideals, this one nowadays is honored more in the breach than in the practice." As everyone knows, this is from *Hamlet*, the hero of which, in speaking of the king's custom of keeping wassail and draining "droughts of Rhemish down," says "it is a custom/more honored in the breach than the observance."

This heavy-headed revel east and west
Makes us traduced and taxed of other nations.
They clepe us drunkards and with swinish phrase
Soil our addition . . .

The footnote in *The Pelican Shakespeare* spells out the obvious: the oft-quoted phrase means "better broken than observed." Clearly treasured ideals and hallowed virtues are not honored more in the breach than in the "practice." Quite the opposite! The problem is, I think, that Shakespeare's line is so good that one tries to bend it—with whatever weird emendation—to the use at hand, even if the exact opposite meaning is intended. I'd like to add that I do not see in this mistake some dark symbol of the poverty of American education—just carelessness and pretension.

Michael Ostrowski
Staten Island, New York

Sihanouk replies

A la rédaction:

Je vous remercie cordialement de votre article objectif ("Sihanouk the Steady," *TNR*, February 17). Veuillez agréer les assurances de ma haute et amicale considération.

Norodom Sihanouk
Peking

Rescuing the boat people

To the editors:

In your January 13 issue, you wrote movingly about the plight of the Vietnamese "boat people," noting how little for them is being done by so many, and asking why the Quakers have not taken up their rescue as a cause ("Diarist Abroad"). We at the American Friends Service Committee are glad, indeed, that you have raised this point and that we can tell you that we have taken up that cause.

The Quakers are a relatively small group in the United States—some 120,000 members of the denomination Much of Quaker social concern is carried out through the activity of the American Friends Service Committee which is active in field work and educational efforts in behalf of peace, international relations, social justice and human equality in various parts of the world and at home, with a total annual budget of nine million dollars (a drop that would vanish in the proposed federal bucket of $531 billion!).

We have been significantly involved in work designed to assist people in Vietnam for many years. We welcome your expression of concern and hope that as a result of your editorial, others will be moved to join us in what can be done about the "boat people" and other Indochinese refugees. At the present time AFSC staff is seeking access to refugee camps in Southeast Asia to determine firsthand what a small organization with limited resources can do to help in a constructive way. We have been sending food directly to Vietnam and Laos to combat hunger resulting from drought and floods.

As you know, AFSC and many Quaker groups strongly opposed the war in Vietnam and the US role in it. In 1979 we oppose the Vietnamese military action in Cambodia as well as the Cambodian border raids in Vietnam that preceded it. We grieve to see the Cambodian and Vietnamese people continuing to suffer.

John A. Sullivan
American Friends Service Committee Inc.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Public morality: untie that knot, please

To the editors:

It seems to me that if you accept Janet Hook's view of public morality (review of *Public and Private Morality*, February 10), that the end justifies the means, then there will be that much less reason for your own existence; surely you will have no right to criticize much evil that is done in the name of the public good, for since none of us has a proprietary right on what the definition of that is, anything will do; for, my dear Rosencrantz, there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so. We have come to a pretty end when we are prepared to accept, as I take it you are, "that men in public roles must do, and are justified in doing, certain things that would be morally impermissible for a private individual." We are "not to lament political realities, but to understand why and to what extent the principles of political action are different from those that apply to private conduct." To understand why the Nazis did what they did—not to lament what they did—so much for hard-headed, objective social scientists and philosophers. Yes, we must judge them in terms of consequences . . . but Nixon thought he was saving the republic when he bombed Cambodia, Johnson too when he pushed through the Tonkin Bay resolution that was in his pocket before the event, and Hitler . . . why, in his mind the consequences of his action were just ducky for Deutschland. "A politician may be more justified in using

(continued on page 47)

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Comparative Financial Review

	Years ended December 31, 1977	1976
Income		
Life premiums	$22,340,297	$16,150,742
Accident and health premiums	25,683,413	23,593,214
Investment and other income	4,799,481	4,090,525
Total income	52,823,191	43,834,481
Benefits and expenses		
Life claims and other benefits	4,126,231	3,735,055
Accident and health claims	12,430,024	11,644,002
Increase in liability for future policy benefits	12,196,239	8,711,984
Amortization of policy acquisition costs	5,183,133	4,431,061
Commissions	5,943,151	5,224,771
General expenses and insurance taxes	5,869,697	5,652,642
Dividends to policyholders	298,064	299,032
	46,046,539	39,698,547
Income before income taxes and realized investment gains (losses)	6,776,652	4,135,934
Provision for income taxes		
Current	—	—
Deferred	1,909,150	1,209,252
Income before realized investment gains (losses)	4,867,502	2,926,682
Realized investment gains (losses)	11,364	356,057
Net income	$ 4,878,866	$ 3,282,739
Earnings per share		
Income before realized investment gains (losses)	$ 2.88	$ 1.76
Realized investment gains (losses)	.01	.21
Net income	$ 2.89	$ 1.97

Assets	$116,000,000
Insurance in Force	$1,289,599,000

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Contents

TRB from Washington	2	The Whirligig of Time
	3	Correspondence
Comment	5	A Modest Victory for Free Trade
John Osborne	7	White House Watch: Regulation Blues
Simon Leys	8	Fools With Initiative
Henry Fairlie	10	A Sense of Metaphor
Morton Kondracke	13	The Days of Derring-Don't
Sanford J. Ungar	16	Tanzania Goes to War
George Kannar	18	Sears Shall Overcome
Glenn Tinder	21	Defending the Welfare State
		ARTS AND LIVES
Stanley Kauffmann	24	Films: 1894-1979
William Gass and John Gardner	25	A Debate on Fiction
Howard Nemerov	30	Poem: "By Al Lebowitz's Pool"
		Books Considered
Josephine Hendin	33	*The Habit of Being* edited by Sally Fitzgerald
William A. Williams	35	*Herbert Hoover* by David Burner
Rudolf Arnheim	36	*The Sense of Order* by E.H. Gombrich
Raymond Vernon	38	*Foreign State Enterprises* by Douglas F. Lamont
Ann Hulbert	40	*The Tribes of America* by Paul Cowan *Turning Points* by Ellen Goodman
Maya Pines	41	*Learning Disabilities* by Betty B. Osman
Jack Beatty	42	*Good as Gold* by Joseph Heller
Paul Berman	44	*King of the Jews* by Leslie Epstein
Nicholas Delbanco	45	*Chamber Music* by Doris Grumbach
Dorothy Wickenden	46	*Suttree* by Cormac McCarthy
	46	Brief Reviews: *Toscanini* by Harvey Sachs *Herman Hesse* by Ralph Freedman
Washington Diarist	51	Public Relations

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

March 10, 1979

A Modest Victory for Free Trade

Jimmy Carter promised to expand free trade back when he was running for president, but that promise didn't get him many votes and his efforts to carry it out have been half-hearted. Carter, like many of his predecessors, has discovered that measures on behalf of free trade carry some political risks. Consequently, faced with a large trade deficit and strong pressures from assorted protectionist interests, Carter has made a series of strategic retreats from his pledge. Since moving into the White House he has negotiated an agreement with Japan to restrict the flow of television sets, and agreements with Taiwan and South Korea to limit imports of shoes. He has proposed higher tariffs on imported sugar and an international sugar treaty which would create a world sugar cartel. He has approved a trigger-price system for steel imports, ostensibly to prevent "dumping" by foreign producers but really to buoy up the sinking American steel industry. It is not a record a free trader can be proud of.

Apparently the president thought all these concessions were necessary in order to prepare for a major triumph for free trade. For two years now he has had one of his most trusted advisers, Robert Strauss, negotiating with 97 other nations to complete what would be the most important agreement on world commerce in more than 30 years. A new trade agreement would be a commendable achievement. The danger is that in his eagerness Carter may cede so much ground to the protectionists on Capitol Hill that it would negate the gains made in the treaty itself.

The final world trade treaty will come out of the current session of the multilateral trade negotiations in Geneva. These negotiations are known as the "Tokyo Round" because they began there in 1973. They should be finished in a few weeks. The purpose of the talks is to revise the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the principal document governing world commerce since 1948. Most of the proposed revisions already have appeared in draft form; only a few details remain to be settled. This treaty will lack the dramatic effect of the changes made in the "Kennedy Round" of the 1960s, which reduced worldwide tariffs by a third, but its long-term consequences may be more important.

The treaty's accomplishments are modest but not insignificant. Unlike previous negotiations, the Tokyo Round has aimed not only at cutting tariffs but also at removing other less obvious obstacles to trade—what are known as "non-tariff barriers," such as import quotas and export subsidies. Tariffs are less important than they used to be, thanks mostly to past GATT negotiations. In 1934, the US levied import duties that averaged nearly 60 percent. Successive cuts have brought the average down to eight percent. The new treaty would further reduce average world tariffs by a third over the next eight years. In the US tariffs would fall to about four percent. In Japan, they would be cut from 10 to four percent.

But the most promising changes found in the new pact concern other trade obstacles. Many American companies have long resented the use of export subsidies by other countries to give their domestic industries an advantage in the international market. The new code forbids subsidies on exports of industrial goods and prohibits any agricultural subsidies that would "materially undercut" another country's domestic producers. These changes would force more producers to compete fairly in world trade.

Besides placing US producers on a more equal footing with their foreign competitors, the agreement would

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open up a lot of new markets to American goods. The biggest new markets, which the Carter administration says are worth $26 billion a year, are in the field of government procurement. Like the US, which has a "Buy America" law giving domestic firms a big advantage, most governments favor their own nation's industries in procurement. But many of them follow this policy without publishing an official rule about it, which makes it harder to proscribe. Under the new pact, governments would have to follow certain uniform bidding practices and publish clear regulations governing procurement. This change has drawn fire from some US corporations, particularly the steel industry, since in addition to opening up foreign procurement to American producers, it would open up the US government market to companies abroad. Exemption from the Buy America law will give countries signing the new GATT agreement access to about $12 billion in US government purchases each year. Both the American Iron and Steel Institute, the steel industry's trade association, and its two most reliable errand boys in the Senate, Birch Bayh of Indiana and John Heinz of Pennsylvania, oppose any weakening of this protectionist subsidy. In fact they want to give even bigger breaks to US firms.

Another obstacle to US firms in world trade is other nations' technical standards. Many of these look innocuous on the surface but actually serve only to keep out imports. Japan, for example, refuses to admit fruit treated with a common fungicide—purportedly for safety reasons but actually to block shipments of American fruit. Many countries make it hard for foreign companies to get import licenses. The new treaty mainly exhorts the signatories to do better, which may not improve matters very much. But the agreement does provide for monitoring abuses of technical standards, and it requires simpler licensing rules.

Like other countries, the US has found its own special ways to violate the principles of free trade. The treaty rightly requires us to make some reforms. American customs valuations can be a nightmare for foreign companies trying to sell in this country. There are nine different ways of calculating the value of imports for the purpose of imposing duties. None of them is very logical. The worst, and most protectionist, formula is known as the "American Selling Price" (ASP), which is used mainly on shipments of shoes and benzenoid chemicals. Other GATT countries have been trying to get the ASP scrapped for years, until now without success. The ASP duty is figured not according to what the American buyer pays for the imported goods, but on the price of a supposedly comparable American product—even if the foreign product is appreciably cheaper. Foreign goods intended for discount markets often are taxed based on the value of American products intended for more affluent consumers. The result of ASP is artificially to inflate the price of imports. The Carter administration has agreed to junk the ASP and the eight other methods in favor of a single valuation formula (with certain exceptions) based on the "transaction cost"—i.e., the price the buyer actually pays. This eminently logical and simple measure deserves praise, but consumers may not notice any change in the prices of imported goods. In order to mollify protectionist interests at home, the administration probably will offset the immediate effect of the new valuation code by raising duty rates to preserve the existing level of protection.

Strauss didn't get everything one would like in the agreement. Ideally no export subsidies would be allowed on agricultural goods. This would increase the demand for American farm products, which get no export subsidy. Ideally the agreement would enforce the elimination of protectionist "safeguards" like import quotas, instead of merely asking countries not to use them. One could suggest any number of improvements, but Strauss has achieved about as much as one could hope for in this round of negotiations.

Strauss takes special pride in the concessions he has wheedled out of the Japanese. In January he told the Joint Economic Committee that Japan has agreed to reduce tariffs on US industrial imports 60 percent, making Japan's tariffs on American goods lower than American tariffs on Japanese goods. He predicted big jumps in farm exports to Japan by 1983 with beef sales up fourfold and orange shipments fivefold.

If the administration gets Congress's approval of the treaty, it can be justifiably proud of its accomplishment. But a new agreement is not worth a raft of new protectionist measures to oil its way through Congress. Carter already has conceded too much in trying to cool the sentiment against free trade on Capitol Hill. Last year Senator Ernest Hollings of South Carolina, voice of American textile interests, pushed through a bill preventing the administration from agreeing to any cuts in US textile tariffs. Carter defeated Hollings with a pocket veto, but since then the administration has reached an agreement with textile firms to impose new restrictions on imports.

The purpose of the new trade pact, after all, is to make international trade freer. The main benefit to Americans is lower prices for consumer goods—no small matter these days. In its determination to win approval of the treaty, the administration should not give away everything it has won simply to mollify narrow interest groups at home. Carter's crucial mistake has been to assume that a few concessions would satisfy his protectionist critics. Two years and several big concessions later, the protectionists remain far from sated. Carter's speech last week at the National Governors' Conference, in which he warned against "selfish protectionist tendencies," suggests that maybe he has finally decided to stand up to the narrow groups that oppose free trade.

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That decision—if it is that—and his resolute efforts to get a new trade agreement demonstrate Carter's most admirable trait: his impulse to approach critical issues with an eye to the good of the whole country, instead of merely reacting to pressures from powerful interests. Members of Congress, on the other hand, already are plaguing him with short-sighted complaints about their own political needs. Apparently the same script that has been used in the fights between the White House and Congress over energy, welfare, tax reform and water policy will be repeated on the trade bill. What the president will offer is a modest enough expansion of free trade. It is not demanding extraordinary statesmanship of the Senate to ask that it forgo its indulgence of protectionism and approve the treaty.

White House Watch

Regulation Blues

The February 22 *New York Times* reported on its first page that "one informed official" of the Environmental Protection Agency had said that presidential intervention in EPA regulatory processes had led "several senior officials" at EPA to "talk of resigning." President Carter's press secretary, Jody Powell, responded to a question about the report the day it appeared. His response is quoted because it reflects a level of Carter White House anxiety and determination to show that Jimmy Carter and nobody else is running his administration and this government that now may fairly be called pathological. Jody Powell in full:

"Let me say that I am aware of some press reports that there are apparently individuals at the EPA who are considering resignation because of disagreement with policies of this administration designed to bring some degree of realism into the regulatory process, and to involve the government as a whole in the battle against inflation. If those reports are accurate and there are such officials there, then they should be aware that their resignations will be gladly accepted at the earliest possible opportunity and should not be hesitant at all in offering them."

The report and Powell's response were minor reflections of a major issue that will soon be more in the news than it is at this writing. The issue is how and how much the President and his advisers and assistants may properly intervene in and affect the federal regulatory processes that govern enormous areas of our national economy, society and life. Speaking for the President and, I am reasonably sure, not knowing what and whom he was talking about, Powell was inviting good people to quit because they believed that Carter assistants acting for the President were trying to keep them from doing the regulatory job that they were hired to do.

Powell was speaking in particular of Thomas C. Jorling, EPA's assistant deputy administrator for water purification and poisonous wastes control. Here we get into one of those tangled webs of past relationships and loyalties that usually go unnoticed and affect a lot that happens in government. Jorling was a staff assistant to Senator Edmund S. Muskie of Maine, the author of much basic environmental legislation, in 1969-71. Jorling drafted the Muskie clean water act of 1972 that Jorling now tries to implement at EPA. The statute, somewhat loosened by 1977 amendments, explicitly orders EPA to make clean water and the cleaning up of polluted water its objectives without regard to costs. Like his sponsor and sometime employer, Senator Muskie, Jorling is understood by senior EPA and White House officials to take the statutory mandate literally and to resist any intrusion, from the White House or elsewhere, that introduces cost and other economic considerations. Right after Powell's outburst, Jorling took leave for a long-planned skiing vacation. It's said at EPA that the leave is a meaningless coincidence; that nobody has accepted Powell's (really Carter's) crude invitation to resign; and that EPA administrator Douglas Costle and his deputy, Barbara Blum (one of the administration's seldom noticed Carter Georgians), hope and expect that he and his disaffected associates will stay.

Important Carter regulatory initiatives will surface by mid-March and the hell they are likely to raise will exceed the controversies brought on by the foregoing and similar episodes. The Carter initiatives take two forms. Both of them are to be melded in one presidential message to Congress. A proposed Regulatory Reform Act will if enacted put into law requirements for regulatory procedure that Carter imposed by executive order March 23, 1978, upon executive departments and agencies responsible to him. He invited independent regulatory agencies and commissions responsible to Congress and not to him to adopt the procedures that he ordered the executive agencies to adopt. The order required the executive agencies responsible to the President to do four principal things. They should make and publish analyses of major regulations with major impacts upon industries and governments. They should regularly reexamine existing regulations and abolish them if they were outdated or useless. They should publish at least twice a year lists of intended regulations so that interested parties would have ample time to comment. Heads of agencies should learn about and take responsibility for their agencies' major regulations. The

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proposed legislation soon to be sent to Congress would extend these requirements to the "independent agencies"—Securities and Exchange Commission, Federal Communications Commission, and 17 others—that consider themselves and have been considered by Congress to be solely responsible to Congress.

The pending Carter initiatives go further. A reorganization plan is to be submitted with the regulatory legislation. It would transform something called the Administrative Conference of the United States—an all but invisible organization authorized by Congress in 1964, and set up in 1968—into a new agency styled in current working papers the Office of Regulatory and Statistical Management. A senior designer and promoter of this prospective institution, a fellow capable of humor, calls it ORSAM and says, in reference to its proposed powers, that the acronym is a play on awesome. The new agency's responsibilities and powers would indeed be considerable. It would take from the President's instrument, the Office of Management and Budget, the control of executive regulatory agencies' demands for information from individuals, companies and non-federal governments. It would take from the General Accounting Office, an instrument of Congress, control over similar demands by independent agencies. It would (in oversimplified shorthand) remove from the White House and the larger Executive Office of the President regulatory monitoring and oversight functions that such environmental purists as Senator Muskie suspect and resent. These functions would be placed in an executive agency responsible to the President but more distant from him than his Council of Economic Advisers and the associated Council on Wage and Price Stability are. Regulatory and statistical oversight and monitoring functions now vested in the departments of Interior and Commerce would be transferred to the new office. The White House story is that the pending regulatory legislation and reorganization plan will not mention, legalize or broaden authority for the sort of White House and executive office intervention into the regulatory process that Muskie and other purists profess to fear. Most of the suspicions and resistance come from environmental groups and spokesmen who regard White House interventionists as what Muskie in a February 14 speech called "anti-regulators who claim it is too costly and burdensome to protect people from the hazards of pollution." The suspicions are aimed principally at two presidential instruments, a Regulatory Agency Review Group established early last year to analyze the agency justifications of 10 to 20 major regulations each year, and a Regulatory Council through which the regulators are supposed to monitor themselves and review general regulatory policy on the President's behalf. RARG's functions will be taken over by ORSAM if Congress approves the upcoming White House proposals; the Regulatory Council will be made permanent as ORSAM's advisory arm.

The case for some presidential oversight of the regulatory process and for some consideration of costs seems to me to be unassailable. The most aggressive—maybe excessively aggressive—proponent of economic and costs oversight is Chairman Charles Schultze of the Council of Economic Advisers. In testimony at a Senate environmental subcommittee hearing, Schultze cited an estimate by the Council on Environmental Quality that the cost to industries, individuals and governments of complying with environmental regulations will rise from $19 billion a year now to $52 billion in 1986. Plus, Schultze noted, more billions for the other protections we all want from the horrors and risks of life in our advanced society. So I am not as moved as I once was by Senator Muskie's and his man Tom Jorling's arguments that my health has got to be protected at any cost against the pollutants that I and my contemporaries helped to bring upon us.

John Osborne

The bungled timing
of Carter's China shock.

Fools With Initiative

The establishment of diplomatic relations with Peking was long overdue. It should have been done as early as 1949. Not to have done it at that time was a mistake. Mistakes can become a source of new obligations which should not be lightly discarded. In old fashioned ethics, when a wealthy gentlemen made a poor girl pregnant, he was supposed at least to support the mother and child, and the prospect of a brilliant marriage with some heiress could not suddenly free him from this moral obligation. The early American mistake of siding with Chiang Kai-shek against a majority of the Chinese people, against history and against common sense, eventually bore one entirely unexpected fruit: modern, dynamic Taiwan with its thriving 17 million people who, at this stage, do not have the slightest desire to become subjects of the People's Republic and who should be guaranteed the right to pursue their own separate destiny as long as they deem fit.

The United States thus had to reconcile two contradictory demands: the demand of common sense, which was to recognize Peking, and the demand of conscience, which is to protect the people of Taiwan.

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This seemingly intractable contradiction was quite satisfactorily solved in practice. A triangular relationship progressively evolved among Washington, Taipei and Peking in a way that smoothly and efficiently met the basic requirements of all three parties. The main interest of the United States—and of world peace—would have been to preserve this balance.

The "normalization" which Carter so rashly and irresponsibly improvised destroyed a precious equilibrium and introduced dangerous instability. The Soviet Union has been needlessly provoked, Peking has been foolishly emboldened and Taipei feels cornered and pushed toward desperate and ominous decisions. An element of unpredictability thus has been injected at once on all sides. In this respect, the Chinese adventure in Vietnam, which is but a beginning, was a direct outcome of Teng Hsiao-ping's surrealistic American experiences: having gauged to its full measure the naiveté, malleability and incoherence of Carter and his Asian experts, Teng felt confident enough to launch this frightful gamble, at the risk of jeopardizing his modernization plans and of presenting the Soviet Union with a golden pretext for the military strike it has dreamed of launching for the last 12 years.

These frightening developments are all the more consternating because they were perfectly avoidable. "Normalization" could have been achieved in far safer conditions if it had been worked out more cautiously and at a slower pace. It even could have been postponed without any real harm. The two main purposes for which Peking is seeking closer relations with the United States are (1) protection against the Soviet menace, and (2) modernization of China. These two objectives, both of which deserve American sympathy and support, were already essentially secured within the framework of the already existing *de facto* relations. If Peking wished to upgrade the relationship and insisted on adorning it with full ambassadorial paraphernalia, it should have paid the price. In particular, it should have provided guarantees about the security of Taiwan. All that Washington had to do was to sit tight and wait. Peking had no other option. It cannot mend its fences with the Soviet Union: the Sino-Russian conflict, deeply embedded in history and determined by permanent factors of political geography, lies beyond the reach and control of modern statesmen. And Peking cannot cancel the modernization drive without committing political suicide. Peking thus had to accept either a continuation of the *de facto* relationship, or "normalization" on American terms.

What Carter proudly announced to the nation at the end of last year was in fact that he had given away, without any compensation, this unique bargaining advantage enjoyed by the United States. In exchange, he had obtained nothing, and he seemed very pleased with it. The reasons for this incredible *marché-de-dupes* are manifold. There is the pathological psychology of a compulsive achiever who, unable to understand the old wisdom of Kipling's law that "most of the things in the world are achieved by judicious leaving alone," is further driven into frantic activity by a show-business-oriented society. Judicious leaving alone achieves many things in the world, but not newspaper headlines and TV spectaculars. The irresponsibility of Carter's political advisers and China experts also contributed. Give an academic the delusion that he may play an historical role and you can turn any decent scholar into a public hazard. As the Russian proverb says: "to have a fool is bad, but have a fool with initiative is worse." For all the expertise displayed in Carter's China policy, it could as well have been designed by Shirley MacLaine. One small example: from Nixon's Shanghai communique to Carter's "normalization" communique, in the Chinese language versions, the Chinese managed a decisive verbal escalation without provoking any reaction on the American side: the phrase "the US *acknowledges* the Chinese position on Taiwan" thus became "the US *admits* the Chinese position on Taiwan." Apparently no one was able, or bothered, to read the Chinese text!

The precise timing of Carter's China initiative has led to much speculation among independent China observers. Since it occurred at the exact moment when it could inflict *the most grievous damage* to Taiwan's political life, the Chinese on Taiwan find it hard to accept the notion that this might have been purely coincidental. Taiwan is by no means a democratic country. Over the years, however, the democratic trend has grown in strength, even finding an echo within a certain fraction of the Kuomintang itself, among some younger and more enlightened members of the leadership. Though still represented by only a minority within the party, this democratic tendency, supported by a majority of the population and better attuned to the reality of

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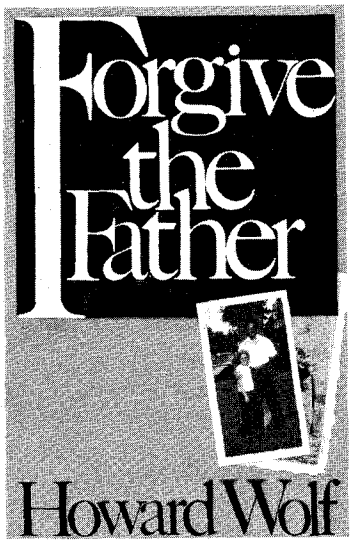

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modern Taiwan, had time on its side and was promised eventual victory.

A most crucial step in that direction was the national elections, due for late December of last year. In contrast with earlier perfunctory elections, this time the electoral campaign was developing in a way that impressed even Taiwan's most severe critics. The political debate was free, bold and thorough; many non-party and opposition candidates were fairly sure to win, to the utter dismay of the Kuomintang die-hards. And then, as victory was practically within the reach of so many of these champions of democracy, came Carter's announcement: a godsent opportunity for the old conservatives, who immediately decreed a state of emergency, cancelled the elections and even arrested several leading opposition personalities. Why could Carter not wait just a few more days? Was it a plot? Was it callousness? Was it ignorance? Though unbelievable to the Chinese, the ignorance seems, alas, to be the correct explanation. Carter's China think tank was not aware that there was an election campaign approaching its climax in Taiwan. The US government spends millions of dollars for the gathering of intelligence. And yet, unfortunately, it did not possess the information that you and I obtain every day for a few cents, simply by buying the newspaper. In a world where democracy is already on the wane, Carter thus unwittingly destroyed, with one mighty blow, this precious and fragile attempt at developing one new democracy in Asia.

Reflecting upon this singular achievement of a man who, without doubt, is lofty-minded and utterly honest, one nearly comes to regret the time when American politics were in the hands of mere crooks.

Simon Leys

Simon Leys is the author of *Chinese Shadows* (Viking).

A politician without metaphor
is a ship without sails.

A Sense of Metaphor

President Carter presents his policies in a way that sometimes reminds me of Babbit. In Sinclair Lewis's novel it was a "sensational event" in Babbit's day to transfer the contents of his pockets from his brown to his gray suit: "He was very earnest about these objects." The very colorlessness of Carter is beginning to seem interesting. It takes more than a gray man, after all, to depict himself in a gray wash. There must be artistry to it. When we encounter such a man in politics, we should not be too quick to dismiss him. We may think that a politician is as dull as ditchwater, for example, but we should then remember that ditchwater is full of microbe life.

This may be the case with Carter: we may be overlooking the microbe life. Perhaps some aspects of his political character will yet surprise us all. For example, it is a long time since America has had a president who seems to, and perhaps does, care so little whether he is loved by the people he governs. This challenges all our preconceptions of what manner of man a president should be, and it is upsetting to a people who would dearly like to love a president again. This apparent lack of the need to be loved may be merely making a virtue of necessity. Nevertheless it is worth speculating that it may be proof of a political character that has its own strength, and a strength that is particularly appropriate when the presidency cannot command the same automatic allegiances as in the past. I am not saying that this is true. But a president who does not need to be loved is poised to emerge in time as a president with a rare power to lead. The cautious will look deep into the ditchwater: more life than we suspect may be multiplying there.

Yet the inability to give even the appearance of leadership is baffling, especially when willingly or unwillingly he must meet so many challenges. I think it is possible to put one's finger on one of his difficulties. Legend has it that as Eugene McCarthy and Norman Mailer watched the acceptance speech of George McGovern at the Democratic Convention in 1972, one of them said to the other that the trouble with that hapless candidate was that he had no sense of metaphor. I can confirm that the remark was made, but since both McCarthy and Mailer have a sense of copyright that encompasses even the remarks that they *wish* they had made, it is not clear from whose lips this one fell. But it was a penetrating observation about McGovern. He had a quiver of good causes which he could have brought to life with a sense of metaphor that made people seize their significance at once. This was essentially what McCarthy himself had done in 1967. Here was this fundamentally conservative man, not all that prominent a figure at the time, who lifted the opposition to the war, almost as soon as he took the stage, onto a new political and national level, largely by his own power of metaphor. All that we had from McGovern were lists of facts and figures, which did not really add up to the issues that he was discussing.

The more one contemplates all of Carter's pronouncements in the past two years, the more it seems that his weakness, too, is a lack of any sense of metaphor. What does one mean by "metaphor" in this

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Spiders

E.O. Wilson: Let me remind you that people everywhere, a large percent of the population, at a very early age have already developed a deep horror at the sight of snakes or spiders with nothing more than gentle nudging from their parents, if that. Yet, in spite of the fact that parents constantly reinforce their children against going near electric sockets, automobiles, knives and the like, phobias against such objects rarely develop.

Marvin Harris: Let's go back again to the possibility that these phobias are genetically programmed – which I'm willing to grant. The overwhelming bulk of the socially conditioned response repertories of different human societies consists, by your own admission, of culturally determined rather than genetically determined traits. Then it seems to me that when one offers a cogent culturological explanation of these ph
has to be considered that thi
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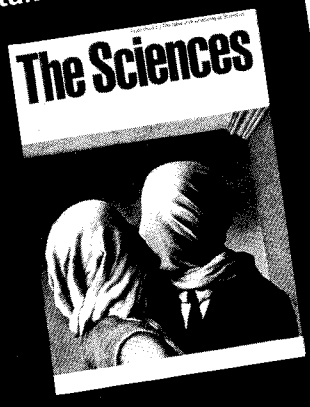

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stances of human
such gigantic phenomena as the
ergence of state-organized societies or the emergence of stratified classes and castes. The enormous differences between industrial civilization and

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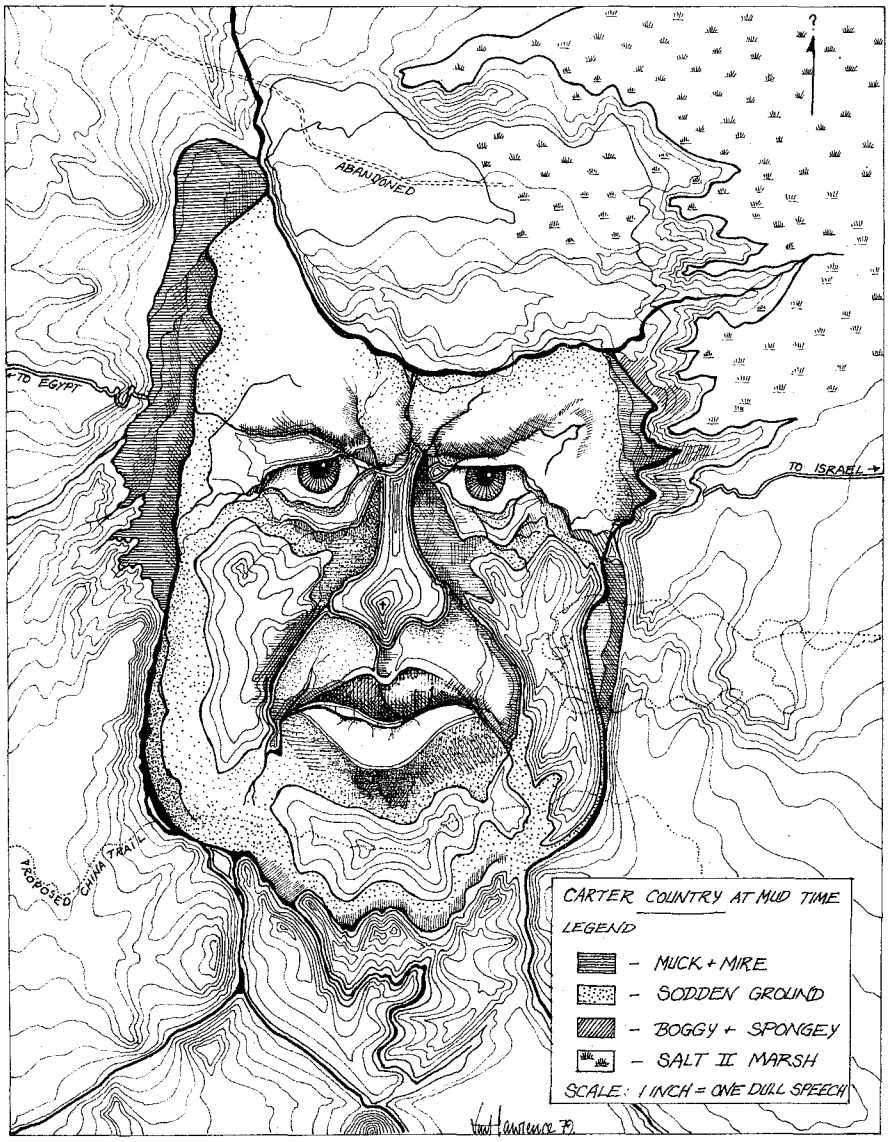
context? Clearly one is not talking of it in the strictest sense. One means that there is some whole sense of history, the world, even life, if one likes, which enables the passing moment, its issues and its challenges to be put in place, and so that their significance can be seen and recognized. However much the revisionist historians may try to reinstall Hoover, the fact is that he had no metaphor within him that could grasp what the Depression meant, while Franklin Roosevelt was inspired by his own strong metaphorical sense of the moment that enabled him and others to grasp it.

The lack of an historical view, a world view, a life view, means also the lack of a strategic view. Bismarck had no interest in acquiring a few colonies for Germany. That was not where the issue for Germany would be settled. But the colonial enthusiasts in the 1880s forced his hand. When one of them came running to him with a map of Africa, showing where Britain and France and Belgium were carving up the dark continent, Bismarck listened and then said that the enthusiast's map of Africa was indeed impressive. "But my map of Africa is here in Europe. Here is Russia and here is France, and here are we between them. That is my map of Africa." That remark is brimful of metaphor: history, knowledge, experience, strategy; a sense of destiny, a sense of limit. "My map of Africa is Europe." One has no equivalent sense that Carter and his administration have the foggiest idea why America should reestablish full relations with China. Perhaps it should. That's not my concern. But there is not one memorable remark in any of his pronouncements to tell us why he thinks that his map of America is there in China. It may be. But why?

When the younger Pitt said after Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz, "Roll up that map of Europe, it will not be needed again in our lifetime," he indicated in a nutshell the size of the upheaval that had taken place. When Edward Grey said at the outbreak of the First World War, "The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime," he grasped in one phrase the collapse of a world order. When Winston Churchill spoke of Italy and therefore the Balkans as "the soft underbelly of the Axis," he was pointing to a strategy that might have saved Eastern Europe from the Russians, just as when he spoke of the "Iron Curtain," he was pointing to the fact that Eastern Europe had been already swallowed and Western Europe had better face the danger to itself. The phrases



drawing by Vint Lawrence

are not memorable just because they are vivid. It was not a gift for rhetoric that gave them birth, but an ability to see great events with the eye of metaphor, to use knowledge and experience to place events under the eye of history. In two years neither Carter nor his administration has uttered one remark that helps to answer either of the two urgent questions: where the true interests of America lie and what are the real resources it has to deploy. It is not enough to speak of the limits of American power when that power is still huge and cannot help forcing choices.

"Where will America fight?" may seem too provocative a question. But at least "Where will America resist?" is a question the world can expect to be answered. Isolated responses to individual events are not a sufficient answer. They are no guide to the future intentions of America. A real answer would be a definition that indeed had the force of metaphor, and that give friend and foe alike something to work on. It is the lack of this that opens Carter and so America to the accusation of a lack of leadership. The policies in response to events might not be all that different, but the events to which a response was needed would take

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different forms, simply because the American position was a known factor in their shaping.

This lack of metaphor is in all Carter's pronouncements on every issue. To talk of the energy crisis as the "moral equivalent of war" is to abandon metaphor for a weak comparison that is convincing to no one. What is it that America has to fight for or against, that it is expected to exert or deny itself as in war? When Roosevelt bellowed in his first inaugural address, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself," he put the fight against unemployment and poverty onto a level that all could grasp. Carter would have said, "We must not be afraid," the point thus lost. What is more, one feels that Roosevelt's remark came out of strong personal experience, that he had known fear. The more one ponders Carter and most of his advisers in the White House, the more one feels that in Georgia all the great events of the past just washed over them. They had responses, no doubt, always responses. But where's the hurt? Where are the lessons?

The language has to come from somewhere, where the people also have been. In the address at Gettysburg, Lincoln reached to the language of the Bible—"Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth"—because it still was the language of the people, appropriate to them on such an occasion. But out of what came Carter's immediately forgotten appeal, in his State of the Union message of 1978, to make America a "beloved community"? It was an attempt to find a metaphor. But to what did the metaphor refer in American experience or in America now? One does not blame the speechwriters, because the man himself must be the real source. What other serious American politician ever would have offered a government "as good and honest, decent and truthful, competent and compassionate, and as filled with love, as are the American people"? The American people must be considered to know themselves better than that. Of course the real flaw in such an evocation is that the government offered is to be no better than the people. What is there to consecrate or hallow if the highest to be found is the lowest common denominator?

Henry Fairlie

Rules for the new CIA.

The Days of Derring-Don't

by Morton Kondracke

In rugged northwest Pakistan, just across the Khyber Pass from Afghanistan, Islamic guerrillas are training for infiltration and combat against the Marxist-dominated Afghan regime. That regime seized power last year with Soviet help. It was responsible last month (again with Soviet advice) for the killing of the United States ambassador in Kabul. Until recently, it would have been safe to bet that the US Central Intelligence Agency was helping the anti-Marxist rebels, at least with money and guns. Nowadays, the CIA isn't. Nor is it buying information and influence with tribesmen in Beluchistan, the secessionist border area between Iran and Pakistan which is a logical target for a Soviet push toward the mouth of the Persian Gulf. The US, it seems, has entered the era of derring-don't. In 1953 the CIA helped restore the shah of Iran to power, but in 1978 it had scarcely a clue that he was about to fall. An inter-agency review has concluded that US intelligence doesn't know very much, either, about what's really going on in interesting places like Indonesia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Zaire.

What's wrong?

Old CIA hands, lately joined by former secretary of state Henry Kissinger, have an easy answer: the agency has been crippled by leaks, congressional investigations, newspaper exposure, morale collapse, personnel reductions and, some even say, high-level Soviet penetration. Kissinger, in an interview with the *Economist* of London declared that "the CIA has been emasculated in recent years, and we are paying for it now, and not only in Iran." According to Kissinger, attacks on the CIA have made its analysts more cautious, deprived the US of ability to stage covert operations and stopped foreigners from "overestimating the CIA's capabilities." Congressional investigations and restrictions, he said, have succeeded in "destroying the mystique of the CIA."

The implication of Kissinger's critique is that the US

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should move things as quickly as possible back to the way they were in the old days, when the president (and his Kissinger) could use the CIA as their private commando corps, and deny responsibility for what the agency had done; the days when Congress never asked what was going on and the American people had no idea what the agency might do in their name. There is a fair chance that those days might return—if Congress fails to enact a suitable charter for US intelligence agencies and if a cold war mentality again takes hold of this country, leading to demands that the CIA be unfettered to combat the Soviet peril.

But there is also a chance—perhaps only a fleeting one—that the United States can have the best of both worlds: effective intelligence *and* adequate controls. The moment seems right. The intelligence agencies, while eager to restore secrecy and elbow room to their operations, seem to accept the principles of congressional oversight and legal restraint. At the same time, Congress is swinging out of the era when it regarded the CIA as a wild animal to be tranquilized and chained, and into a period of consciousness that the world is a dangerous place. Administration and congressional sources say they are on the verge of agreement on terms for new charter legislation that Congress will begin considering next month. There are dangers, though, that differences within the administration, between the branches or within Congress may thwart efforts to arrive at the necessary compromises.

Congressman Les Aspin, a member of the House Intelligence Committee, said, "There is no way to get a charter passed without the executive branch pushing for it—and not only publicly, but privately. Without a charter, you'll have a bad situation. In the short run, the agencies won't do anything that might stir up a hornet's nest while the charter is still pending. In the long run, when they realize there won't be any charter at all, they'll do as they please. If I were a Machiavellian CIA man, I'd do everything I could to prevent agreement on a charter, and then go back to doing the old stuff."

The old stuff—nostalgic reminiscences by Kissinger and CIA alumni notwithstanding—was not necessarily quality stuff. Kissinger himself used to complain—and none too quietly—about bad information he and Richard Nixon were receiving about the world; and this was in the days before any congressional committee or newspapers exposed CIA, FBI or White House excesses. And it was Kissinger who developed some of the agreements—with the shah and with Egypt's President Sadat, for example—that precluded US intelligence agencies from free-ranging information-gathering among potential dissidents and armies. Kissinger also forced intelligence analysts to trim their reporting to suit his policy preferences. The same charge is made against President Carter's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski. Instead of serving as policy processor, or as an honest broker between agencies, his critics contend, Brzezinski's National Security Council staff—like Kissinger's—is a power center with its own point of view on every issue.

In other respects, the Carter administration has moved away from Kissinger tactics, for better or worse. This administration does no swashbuckling. Reportedly, it engages in very few covert operations, and those are said to be trivial. Carter says he doesn't believe in interfering in the internal affairs of other nations, and administration insiders praise his refusal to indulge in spasms of Mayaguez-style activity. He stays out of trouble. But in doing so, he leaves the dirty-gray area between diplomacy and war almost entirely free for Soviet play.

Meanwhile, the Carter administration has instituted reforms designed to improve the quality of intelligence produced by the intelligence communities. Covert operations used to be the main activity of the CIA. "The way to get ahead is to run a war," was an old agency maxim. But this administration and Congress want to bring on the dawning of an Age of Analysis. For a year and a half, officials say, a high-level presidential review committee has been refocusing intelligence collection and analysis on large-scale developments around the world: economic, regional and social movements, as opposed to isolated facts and figures that used to be the agencies' forte. Since the Iran crisis, Carter also has ordered the agencies to pay closer attention to the political makeup, power centers and potential troublemakers in countries around the world. White House and State Department officials say the administration also may increase the number of political officers abroad and encourage foreign service officers to learn obscure languages. It's said that the political section of the US embassy in Iran contained only one fluent Farsi speaker during most of the revolutionary crisis.

At least at the top level, the Carter administration appears genuinely dedicated to establishing a new congressional charter to govern US intelligence activities. Negotiating a public charter presents would-be Machiavellian wrench-throwers with a toolbox full of obstruction devices. There also are many opportunities for honest disagreement. For a while, administration officials were locked in a seemingly hopeless wrangle about whether charter legislation should authorize US spy agencies to recruit agents among foreigners visiting the US on government-sponsored tours. In the last Congress, the Senate Intelligence Committee produced a draft charter which failed to pass, in part, because Congress and the agencies could not agree about how closely the legislative branch should try to manage—or "micro-manage," as critics said—US spy activities.

Lately the key issue dividing administration charter writers is this: what should the government have to do before it can spy on Americans who have information

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the government wants, but who aren't suspected of committing a crime or working for a foreign power? Intelligence officials say that going before a judge—perhaps one who is unfamiliar with intelligence needs—is too onerous a requirement. Congressional and some administration officials say the situation arises so rarely that the citizen involved can safely be given all the protections the Constitution allows—that is, the requirement for a court warrant—before he is bugged, tapped, followed or has his house broken into. It would seem a reasonable compromise to authorize a special panel of judges to handle warrant requests, and to develop some expertise and sensitivity through experience.

Another key charter issue is how to insure secrecy for US intelligence operations, while protecting the constitutional rights of citizens and allowing adequate congressional oversight. CIA officials regard protection of their information sources and methods of operation as crucial to the agency's ability to do its job. One high-level official said that even the existence of the Freedom of Information Act—despite its exemptions for national security secrets—has had a chilling effect on the CIA's ability to recruit agents abroad, get information from friendly intelligence services and, even, interview Americans about their travels. The publication of unauthorized books by former CIA agents adds to the trouble, he said. According to this official, "It's the most important problem. It's fundamental. No one is going to confide information in you if he thinks it's going to leak." The CIA favors legislation making it a crime to release classified information to unauthorized persons and enabling espionage prosecutions to be conducted without the need to reveal government secrets either to the defendant's counsel or to the public.

Representative Aspin, a thoughtful liberal on defense and foreign policy questions, is inclined to agree that new controls are needed to protect US secrets. He has proposed making it possible to try spies without making sensitive information public and adding intelligence "sources and techniques," plus military war plans, to the list of the nation's top secrets—now limited to atomic energy and code information—whose unauthorized release can be punished by law. Release of lesser secrets could lead to a government official's losing his job or security clearance. Aspin also favors a law requiring that manuscripts by former intelligence employees be submitted for review, and allowing the agency to obtain an injunction against publication if the book or article would cause "immediate harm" to the country.

In principle, a consensus seems to be developing in Congress and the administration that the CIA shouldn't have to report to eight separate congressional committees before undertaking a secret operation. Suggestions have been made for one joint committee to oversee intelligence, or perhaps one House and one Senate intelligence committee. But it remains to be seen whether members of the other panels will part with the right to be privy to the nation's most dramatic secrets, even though, at present, these secrets seem to be very few.

CIA officials complain that the reporting requirement makes it impossible for the US to engage in clandestine operations abroad. Some congressional sources accuse the CIA of using this as an excuse to refrain from such operations in the hope that frustration will encourage the executive branch and Congress to "unleash" the CIA to undertake whatever tricks it and the president can concoct. Congress has leaked some sensitive secrets lately, including the fact that the Soviet Union has fired a cruise missile from a Backfire bomber, but there have been no leaks whatever about any of the covert operations currently underway by the CIA.

Should the US engage in covert operations? It seems undeniable that it should—sparingly and prudently, and with proper executive and congressional supervision. Defining the limits and the means of accountability is another issue facing the drafters of a new intelligence charter. Should the law forbid peacetime assassinations overseas, torture and "destabilization" of democratic regimes? Or should covert operations be subject to approval by the president and oversight by

CIA
IRAN BRANCH
PSST... HEAR THE LATEST? THERE MAY BE A REVOLT IN IRAN...
QUICK... CALL PRESIDENT TRUMAN.
Mike Peters
DAYTON DAILY NEWS 1979

drawing by Mike Peters

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Congress? I think the law should forbid the dirtiest kinds of tricks, except in the most extreme circumstances, which would require certification by the president and approval by congressional overseers.

Simply passing a charter will not guarantee either high-quality intelligence work—analysis or operations—or that mistakes won't be made and excesses committed. Spy agencies are instruments nations use to carry out extraordinary policy—policy that often violates the laws of other countries and, sometimes, their own. When countries feel great threat—as the US did in the cold war, when the CIA was created, and may feel yet again—they are likely to abandon restraint. If the United States misses this chance to establish a charter, however, it seems almost certain at some time to repeat the errors of the past, and possibly to commit worse ones.

More guns, less butter for one of the poorest countries in the world.

Tanzania Goes to War

by Sanford J. Ungar

Dar es Salaam

"It's not so much a question of who wins," said a Tanzanian editor trying to explain his country's futile and frustrating border war with Uganda. "It's a matter of who humiliates whom. It's an issue of pride." Tanzania was badly humiliated in the early stages of the little war, when Ugandan troops overran the remote Kagera salient in the northwestern corner of Tanzania, destroying a sugar mill, seizing precious cattle and killing hundreds of civilians. Black Africa's brute, Idi Amin, dealt a stunning blow to black Africa's philosopher, Julius Nyerere, and just enough of the world laughed to hurt Tanzania's feelings as well as its economy.

The question of what to do about all this—how to punish Amin—was complicated. Tanzania, one of the poorest countries in the world, can ill afford a long, protracted struggle. Just to transport a few thousand soldiers over primitive roads to the battle zone and to divert other meager resources to the front has cost about a million dollars a day for several months. Amin's army was better trained and, of course, better rehearsed. Indeed, one of Tanzania's first acts in the war was to destroy three of its own Soviet-supplied MiGs in the air. It's not clear whether Tanzanian forces later actually drove the Ugandan invaders back late last year, as the government 600 miles away in Dar es Salaam claimed, or whether Uganda simply withdrew its troops once Amin had gotten all the attention he wanted from the affair. But beginning in late January, significant numbers of Tanzanian troops crossed into southwestern Uganda along with recent and long-time Ugandan exiles. They were surprisingly successful, shooting down 18 of Uganda's combat aircraft and, in late February, capturing the town of Masaka on the road to Kampala.

Tanzania's angry desire to strike back at Amin, and perhaps to overthrow this troublemaker once and for all, has been restrained by unusual and apparently genuine considerations of principle. After purporting to play the peacemaker in so many other African disputes, and publicly defining the minority white regimes in the South as their only true enemies, the Tanzanians could not justify to themselves a serious counterinvasion of Uganda. If Nyerere were known to have sent his own forces across the border he would risk severe criticism within his own government and among the country's tiny but overdeveloped intellectual elite. A young official of the Foreign Ministry said, "We simply cannot be aggressors. It is against our principles." Even when these principles were compromised early this year, the government downplayed its own forces' role, telling the Tanzanian people only that Amin was being attacked by Ugandan exiles.

For these reasons, Tanzania's weapons in the fight with Uganda have been mostly words and pictures. Nyerere and other government officials have accused Amin of imitating the "racists" and "imperialists" to the south. Posters bearing hideous caricatures of the Ugandan president appeared in most of Dar's shop windows. The celebrations marking the 17th anniversary of Tanganyika's independence were called off, and the entire Independence Day supplement of the government-controlled *Daily News* last December 9 was devoted to an attack on "dictator Amin," including photographs of children who had been injured or executed by his undisciplined soldiers. Nyerere rejected Amin's overtures for mediation, saying that no peace could be reached until Uganda paid reparations for the devastation of the Kagera salient. At one point

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outsiders tried to persuade Libya to put up a large sum of money that Uganda could then hand over to Tanzania, but Libyan president Qaddafi apparently balked at such a flagrant identification with Amin.

The war with Uganda has caused an extraordinary surge of patriotism and national dedication in Tanzania. Government offices in Dar es Salaam stay open for an extra hour a day, so that civil servants can extend themselves (exactly how, it is not clear) for the war effort. The story is told of a rural farmer who appeared at a district office wanting to donate two cows to the cause, and of a wealthy Asian businessman who called a newspaper office and asked where he could send a contribution of 10,000 shillings (about $1300). At the chaotic Dar airport, where almost nothing else works, young men in fatigues step proudly up to the tax-free shop window and get served ahead of other customers.

Just as in Uganda, the war has conveniently served in Tanzania as an excuse, if not a cover-up, for other problems. Cooking gas and butter have long been in short supply in Dar, for example, but now the shortages can be blamed on the situation at the front. So can the badly deteriorating streets and roads and the cancelled flights, the congestion and delays in the port.

Because it has required genuine additional sacrifices and created a feeling of emergency and insecurity in a country that was already stretched rather taut, the war also has provoked a sincere reexamination by many Tanzanians of the country's political priorities. Many educated people ask whether Tanzania can afford its intense involvement in the southern African struggles for black majority rule. Tanzania doesn't sacrifice as much as Zambia and Mozambique, whose economies and food supplies must support tens of thousands of resident guerrillas and refugees, and whose territory is routinely bombed and invaded by Rhodesia. But as the leader of the "front-line states" involved in the Rhodesian struggle, a primary negotiator on the situation in Namibia and a potential supporter of an armed uprising in South Africa, Tanzania has an enormous emotional commitment. Much of the country's intellectual energy is turned southward, rather than inward.

"Zimbabwe will be resolved, but only after a long time . . . longer than we had thought, at least five more years," one Tanzanian official said recently. "Namibia may take the same amount of time. But South Africa? I am almost 40 years old, and it may be optimistic to think that situation will be solved in my lifetime." Can Tanzania keep up the pressure and the concentration, the daily newspaper and radio blasts (when Amin or some subsequent villain doesn't substitute himself as a target), the sheltering of resistance group leaders who often fight with one another, the unrelenting appeals to the West to do more to end white minority rule? "I can't see how Tanzania, with its present psychological makeup, could just say one day, 'Enough is enough. We're turning our back on the South.' . . . But it's a question of balance. We cannot neglect Tanzania's development for the sake of African liberation."

Has Tanzania neglected itself and its own people, who have an average per capita income of only $198 a year? For western idealists who thought that Nyerere's brand of self-sacrificing African socialism was the answer to development problems, recent visits have not been encouraging. The capital itself is in shabby condition, and not just because of Nyerere's old dream of moving the seat of government to the interior, a plan that has not yet advanced beyond the dreaming stage. For the first time in years, there are frequent reports of violent street crime; the gangs lurking on some corners resemble those in distinctly non-socialist African capitals like Kinshasa. The gap between the rich and the poor probably remained narrower in Tanzania than in most third world countries, but the overall ambiance is one of poverty. No one is permitted to own more than one house, but there are still many people in the cities who have no house at all.

If things are not working in Tanzania, it is not for a lack of aid. One western ambassador said, "This is the most aided country in all of Africa. Everyone has a different reason for giving. The British do it because it is a former British colony, the Germans because it is a former German colony, the Scandinavians because they are idealistic. The Russians do it to keep up with the Chinese, and the Chinese to keep up with the Russians." The United States has stepped up its aid program, including the first contingent of Peace Corps volunteers in 10 years, presumably because the Tanzanians have decided to like Americans again. This new friendship seems to be based in part on the warm relationship between Jimmy Carter and Nyerere, who is a devout Catholic. The US Agency for International Development is preparing a rural development plan for an entire region in northern Tanzania. This project has become a symbol of Nyerere's belated recognition that he may have to rely on some capitalist techniques and resources to achieve his ambitious socialist goals.

But with all the aid, Tanzania still has not overcome many of the basic obstacles it faced at independence: virtually no mineral resources, the lack of a well-developed infrastructure and a population that is scattered across the countryside on tiny subsistence farms. The government recently announced that the Tanzanian economy grew at a rate of six percent last year, but at the same time it revealed that production of all of the country's cash agricultural crops had fallen or not measured up to the latest goals. And Nyerere's *ujamaa* (collective) villages project has failed; out of 7667 such registered villages, only two have been certified (and well publicized) as carrying out more than half of their economic activity collectively. The World Bank and other aid donors repeatedly certify that Tanzania is doing the right things, but still the country seems to get poorer. The economic drain of the conflict with

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Uganda—and, some argue, the preoccupation with southern Africa—seem likely to make the prognosis worse in the short run.

An undercurrent of political unrest apparently is developing in several areas of the country, though one hears little about it in Dar es Salaam. It is particularly pronounced on Zanzibar, the offshore island that joined with Tanganyika to form the nation of Tanzania 15 years ago. Zanzibaris insist that there are many more political prisoners on the mainland than the government admits, and they argue that if Tanzania were more carefully scrutinized by the idealists who have long paid homage to Nyerere, the country would turn out to have a mediocre record in the area of human rights. Some islanders complain that Zanzibar has given much more to the mainland than it has received in return. They believe that the united government and its representatives have mismanaged Zanzibar's financial reserves by keeping them in the weakest of the western currencies. And they say that their influence in the country's—and even the island's—affairs has diminished since Nyerere merged the island's single party and the mainland's single party into a single national party, the *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* (Swahili for revolutionary party) in 1977.

But Nyerere's reputation is intact among most of his own people and other Africans. Few doubt his personal honesty and dedication. He is still one of the few leaders in Africa who is willing to talk candidly and risk alienating his counterparts elsewhere (as when he recently denounced the Organization of African Unity as "a trade union for heads of state"). But rumor has it that *mwalimu* (the teacher) is getting tired and that, at 57, he is seriously thinking about retiring in the next few years. His preferred successor is supposedly Aboud Jumbe, the leader of Zanzibar and the first vice-president of Tanzania. But Jumbe, 59, is ill (he recently had heart surgery in Washington) and, some say, not qualified for the job. Other possible successors are not obvious.

One thing that has flourished amidst the general gloom is Tanzania's relationship with the United States. Carter and the State Department gained important prestige with Nyerere by becoming so intensely involved in the negotiations for a settlement in Zimbabwe and Namibia. Tanzania even risked the anger of other "front-line" states by supporting the Anglo-American initiative in Rhodesia. The United States also won points with its prompt (if easy) condemnation of Amin for the Ugandan invasion of the Kagera salient. Yet some suspicions do not die easily. One Tanzanian intellectual in Dar es Salaam put it this way: "We know the Ugandans used Soviet arms, and we realize that Soviet motives in Africa are not always pure. But for years the United States was able to get rid of any African head of state it didn't like. . . . So we still can't help wondering whether the CIA isn't responsible for what Amin did."

Corporations horn in on the civil rights movement.

Sears Shall Overcome

by George Kannar

In 1976 Charles Morgan Jr. of Birmingham, Alabama, a white southerner who had become one of the most widely respected civil rights lawyers in the United States, abruptly resigned as director of the ACLU's Washington office, charging that the venerable civil liberties organization had interfered with his right to speak out on public issues. Morgan said he was resigning as a matter of principle even though he had "no plans, no private law practice, no prospective high-paying clients which make lawyers attractive to law firms, no private wealth, not much savings, lots of expenses, and a son in college."

Well, he doesn't have to worry anymore. Three years later, Morgan runs a fast-rising Washington law firm, Charles Morgan, Jr. and Associates, with clients that include some of the biggest corporations and trade associations in the country. As a private practitioner

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Morgan earns about $200,000 a year, using many of the same media techniques and legal arguments he developed as a civil rights lawyer.

To hear Morgan tell it, he's still defending civil liberties and civil rights; he's just serving different clients. Instead of representing powerless individuals, he's now employed by behemoths like Sears, Roebuck & Co., the Tobacco Institute, and the Grocery Manufacturers of America in the pursuit of what they see as a right to be free from government regulation. Morgan regularly tells reporters that he's being perfectly consistent in that he's always opposed Big Government. But it's hard to see the similarity between Morgan's old adversary "Bull" Connor and the people he's suing now. It does not necessarily follow that Morgan is being insincere, however. Old allies agree that he never has been short on self-deception.

Morgan is once again the prophet of a new civil rights movement—this time a movement by giant corporations. For the first time since the 1930s, businesses are using the courts in an attack on the regulatory state. Encouraged by a recent Supreme Court decision recognizing a "corporate right to free speech," business is resurrecting legal arguments based upon concepts of corporate "liberty" and substantive due process that have not been taken seriously since the early New Deal. EPA, OSHA and the federal consumer protection agencies already have felt the impact of this movement. Morgan brings to it prestige, legitimacy and his easy familiarity with the people (including reporters) and ideas of the old civil rights movement, as well as years of experience in civil rights law. He is worth the money.

The tobacco industry spent five million dollars in California last fall to defeat a referendum proposal that would have restricted cigarette smoking in public places. The ad campaign emphasized the grave danger to civil liberties involved in infringing the "right to smoke." In Washington, the Tobacco Institute retained Chuck Morgan to push its new move for "smokers' rights" in the courts. At the Institute's behest, Morgan has defended a Virginia restaurateur who refused to establish the no-smoking section required by state public health law in the name of something Morgan calls the "corporate right to free association." In February the Institute began a preemptive nationwide attack against smoking regulation through ads in the national press explicitly comparing limits on smoking to "segregation" because they ban smokers to the back of the airplane. Of course, when it comes to discussing segregation, the Tobacco Institute should know what it's talking about. Its president, a former North Carolina congressman, voted against the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and tried to bury the 1965 Voting Rights Act in committee.

Morgan's best-known client these days is Sears, Roebuck & Co. In the name of civil rights for corporations, Morgan is helping Sears's attempt to deny compensation to people whose civil rights it has abridged. At the end of January Sears sued all the agencies responsible for, and some only remotely connected with, the enforcement of federal equal employment opportunity laws. It sued on behalf of all retailers in the US employing more than 15 people. The 57-page complaint Morgan filed for Sears argued that corporations have a constitutional right to be regulated only by agencies and rules that are "consistent," which it claims present federal job rules are not. Sears also asserts that corporations have a right not to be held financially accountable for employment discrimination (unless it's premeditated) until perfect integration is achieved in government employment and the government has somehow created a perfectly integrated labor market for them to draw from.

Sears launched the suit with a massive media effort that began with a Morgan press conference at the Sears Tower in Chicago. Sears had the complaint printed up as a booklet for the press (the document filed in a court was merely typed), and flew several top Sears executives from Chicago to Washington for a breakfast with the national press at which the company's president declared, "Our strategy was not to seek publicity." Sears's president also phoned civil rights leaders around the country to assure them that the company was not against equal employment per se, a message the chairman of the board repeated to Sears's employees in a letter he wrote them a few days after the suit was filed. Morgan himself met with the Reverend Jesse Jackson of Chicago's Operation PUSH in an unsuccessful attempt to sell Jackson on the case. Instead, Jackson's response was to demand that Sears withdraw the suit and to begin organizing a national coalition of women and minority groups to intervene in the suit against Sears if it does not.

The Sears offensive may seem like a shrewd public relations move, but Sears may have bitten off more than it can chew. This is not the same kind of political issue as "smokers' rights"; it is very serious stuff. Sears would like to portray itself as leading a united front of discrimination's victims against a bumbling govern-

Staff Addition:

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ment in the interest of making equal employment enforcement more efficient. But the ploy may boomerang. The legal case is weak. And what is worse for Sears, it puts the company's employment practices into the limelight and invites public scrutiny of earlier litigation on the subject. Because of this, the lawsuit may turn out not to have been such a good idea, even as a public relations gambit.

The legal weakness of the Sears lawsuit is that almost all its premises are either wrong or irrelevant. For example, Sears complains that the federal government's veterans preference policy has caused Sears to hire disproportionate numbers of white males. Unfortunately for this theory, federal veterans preference legislation has only applied, with trivial exceptions, to the government's own civil service and not to private employers. The consequence of this policy has been to siphon white males *out* of the private labor market, leaving women and minorities disproportionately *available* to private employers like Sears.

The lawsuit also argues that last year's change in the age discrimination act to forbid mandatory retirement before age 70 will reduce employee turnover and thereby make it harder for employers to comply with race and sex discrimination statutes. But these statutes don't penalize employers for low turnover; they only concern how employers fill the jobs that actually do become available. Likewise, Sears argues that the government is responsible for private employers' discriminatory practices because the GI Bill disproportionately channeled white males into college. But the discrimination laws don't forbid employers to take valid job qualifications into account. If an employer proves that a college education is necessary for a given job, the employer can't be punished for hiring in proportion to a pool of college graduates that is itself disproportionately white and male.

As for the much-touted "inconsistencies" in federal equal employment enforcement, they seem to boil down to some slightly repetitive data filing requirements arising from Sears's dual role as a regular private employer and a government contractor. Sears could escape this burden simply by exercising its undeniable corporate civil right not to accept contracts with the government when it doesn't like the terms.

The complaint asserts that "no court has found Sears to have discriminated against any of its employees in violation of Title VII" of the Civil Rights Act, relating to job discrimination. But according to Herbert Hill, former longtime national labor director of the NAACP, this statement overlooks the "many, many" out-of-court Title VII settlements Sears has agreed to. And the complaint is silent—for very good reasons—about Sears's record of liability under the Equal Pay Act, which applies to women only.

Finally, in trying to argue that present federal regulations are too "conflicting" for an employer to comply with, Sears has to face the inconvenient fact that the government issued a set of Uniform Guidelines on employee selection practices last summer and another set on affirmative action two weeks before Sears filed suit. The Carter administration also has consolidated all the agencies in charge of equal employment, a fact that the Sears complaint barely mentions.

Hundreds of Sears employees have filed job discrimination complaints since Title VII was passed. Many of these back pay claims have been accruing for more than 10 years. In 1973 the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission chose Sears, which employs one out of every 200 American workers, for one of its five major investigations. The result was an extensive investigation of Sears similar to studies the Commission had earlier conducted on AT&T and the steel industry. While the investigation was going on, Sears and EEOC entered the conciliation talks the Commission is required to conduct before filing a general suit on behalf of all discriminated-against workers. In the past, the EEOC has been accused of settling for too little back pay—$31 million in the steel case—in exchange for promises of future good behavior, so Sears had good reason to worry that any settlement with the EEOC would be expensive.

Sears officials say that conciliation discussions broke down toward the end of last year. At about the same time, they say, Morgan, who had been handling the negotiations for Sears, began serious work on Sears's constitutional complaint. Obviously this lawsuit was filed in anticipation of a massive EEOC employment discrimination suit against Sears. The Commission formally voted to terminate pre-litigation discussions in mid-January, and at the end of the month Sears filed its water-muddying suit, which will probably delay final resolution of the matter and confuse the public regarding the underlying issue. Sears's assertion that the two cases are unrelated is simply not credible.

The EEOC is forbidden by law to divulge what evidence it has about discriminatory practices at Sears. Sears, which is free to release the EEOC's study of its employment practices, has no intention of doing so.

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Indeed, Sears has gone to court several times to prevent any information about its employment practices from coming out. Last week some details of the EEOC study were leaked to the press. They seemed to confirm the extensive results of a study by the Council on Economic Priorities in 1974, when the EEOC began looking at Sears. The Council gave Sears the highest marks in the retail industry minority employment (15.3 percent, or almost exactly the same proportion as minorities then constituted in the national workforce) and very high marks for minority placement in new officials' and managers' jobs (32.7 percent of all new positions created from 1971–73). But concerning women, the picture is abysmal. And the figures make the claims of Charles Morgan's lawsuit appear even more irrelevant. Sears's problem, it appears, it not that it is precluded from hiring women: in 1974 more than half its workforce consisted of women. The problem is that Sears will not promote them. Ten years after the Civil Rights Act forbade job discrimination on account of sex, only four out of 840 Sears store managers were women, and all four were recent appointees. On the shopfloor, women comprised more than 60 percent of the salesworker force, but only 20 percent of the salespeople selling the so-called "big ticket" items such as refrigerators and stoves, where the pay includes commissions as well as salary. There are no special requirements for promotion for these "big ticket" jobs either, although the promotion can mean doubling one's income. People are promoted straight from behind the counter. At least until 1974,Sears gave such jobs to men in wildly disproportionate numbers. There is nothing in Charles Morgan's complaint for Sears addressing, let alone excusing or justifying, this shopfloor promotion policy. If the Council's 1974 analysis bears any resemblance to reality, Morgan's diversionary lawsuit will pay for itself if it achieves even a small reduction in the ultimate back pay award Sears will have to agree to.

Another fact from Sears's equal employment put also calls into question the company's good faith in trying to set itself up as an equal employment advocate, instead of the foot-dragger it apparently is. In 1971 the company's chief labor relations lawyer testified against legislation designed to strengthen the federal equal employment enforcement effort. Complaining that only people "of a particular philosophy" ever get appointed to the EEOC, Sears helped defeat an effort to give the EEOC the power to issue cease-and-desist orders against employment discrimination similar to the orders the NLRB issues against unfair labor practices. When giant corporations start casting their objections to regulation in terms of "rights" and "liberties," one better understands why Jeremy Bentham dismissed the whole natural rights philosophy as "nonsense on stilts."

No one should expect kindness to be efficient, and ordinarily no one does.

Defending the Welfare State

by Glenn Tinder

The current retreat from the welfare state cannot be stopped merely by reaffirming the liberal faith. Defenders of the welfare state cannot evade the self-criticism that present conditions demand of them, and this self-criticism must take place on the philosophical as well as the pragmatic level.

The truth is that there are good reasons—although not necessarily sufficient ones—for this country to retreat from the welfare state. The most obvious of these is that many welfare programs have not worked as they were supposed to. Milton Friedman, in *Capitalism and Freedom*, notes with contemptuous assurance and brevity the perversions and failures affecting the reforms of recent decades: regulatory agencies devised to protect consumers in fact are controlled by the interests that were supposed to be regulated; the income tax supposedly is to redistribute income in favor of the disadvantaged, but actually is "a facade, covering loopholes and special provisions that render rates that are highly graduated on paper largely ineffective"; the agricultural program, set up "to help inpecunious farmers," has "wasted public funds, distorted the use of resources, riveted increasingly heavy and detailed controls on farmers . . . and withal . . . done little to help the impecunious farmer"; housing programs have "worsened the housing conditions of the poor, contributed to juvenile delinquency,

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and spread urban blight"; the social security system, created to provide basic security for everyone, has to be supplemented by mounting welfare doles. The list is not exhaustive. Nor, in its general purport, is it controversial or partisan. Hardly anyone now claims that the welfare state works very well.

Another good (but perhaps not sufficient) reason for withdrawing from past humanitarian commitments is that they have turned out to be in conflict with other values, above all with price stability and with national defense. In the Johnson years it was widely assumed that the United States had enough money to avoid irresolvable dilemmas and tragic choices. But the climate of public feeling suddenly has changed. It is now generally assumed that large-scale public expenditures cause inflation; and it is recognized by everyone that inflation washes away the foundations of social order and that its consequences are harsh for the poor as well as for the prosperous.

National security also competes formidably with the welfare state. The budgetary claims of the Pentagon cannot be countered by deriding the need to "make the rubble bounce." Being *able* to make the rubble bounce, however futile it would be actually to do so, does have a bearing on the security of the nation—and not only on the security of the nation but on the ability of the government to protect democracy and to press for the extension of human rights elsewhere in the world.

Underlying explicit criticisms of the welfare state, one may suspect the presence of implicit doubts—unstated, or even unrecognized, misgivings about its moral legitimacy. For example, while old-fashioned charity encouraged condescension, the welfare state would, if it could, reduce humanitarianism to administrative routine. That may be desirable on the whole, but it would still take something important out of human relationships. Further, one can wonder whether the spectacle of aimless enjoyment that this nation presents (although not in the lives of the worse off), does not tend to discredit the notion of institutionalizing welfare. Is that not to make comfort and entertainment the purpose of life? Of course it's illogical for prosperous liberals to qualify their commitment to welfare policies because of their distaste for a style of life enjoyed by practically everyone except those in need of welfare benefits. But support for policies designed to give everyone a share in material plenty was bound to be more enthusiastic when people were more naively confident than they now are that material plenty is an unmixed blessing.

But if we abandoned the welfare state, the result would be political demoralization in the full sense of the term: the loss in our political life not only of *morale* but of the sanction of *moral law*. Human beings cannot for long accept a concept of politics that severs all connection between government and ultimate values. They insist on linking their temporal and spiritual concerns. The prophets of ancient Israel, Plato and his ideal of philosophic kingship, and medieval theocracy testify in diverse ways to this determination. The modern welfare state, in its own way, does so as well. The dangers inherent in joining the realms of Caesar and the spirit are obviously great. But completely separating them is intolerable. Political life unrelated to our understanding of the highest good must be either trivial or brutal; and an understanding of the highest good that is unreflected in the public realm must be academic and sterile. The welfare state is a relatively humble spiritualization of the public order. It symbolizes the idea that government should serve justice and kindness. If we give up trying to invest our politics with that modest amount of spiritual significance—if fiscal responsibility comes in effect to be our understanding of the highest good—what will remain in our public life to command respect?

It is because the retreat from the welfare state has been prompted by good reasons, however, that reiterating old liberal arguments and appealing to traditional liberal sentiments will not be enough. The welfare state must be reconceived.

The issue is not primarily one of practicality. It is risky to rely on trying to show that welfare policies can be, or have been, more effective than appearances indicate. It is risky also to concentrate on arguing the compatibility of social welfare with economic stability and national security. Such tactics cannot be wholly spurned: if the welfare state were completely unworkable it would be morally indefensible. But probably not all issues of practicality can be resolved in favor of the welfare state; and some of the misgivings about the welfare state—that compassion will be wholly bureaucratized, that life will be institutionally bound to mere material well-being—are not practical. Indeed, a disproportionate concern for practicality is what has led to the present crisis of the welfare state. Practicality should be subordinated to considerations of a different order. The welfare state can be rendered defensible only by being resituated, only by being put on better foundations than the pragmatic and optimistic concept of life that liberals traditionally have accepted.

The process of rethinking the welfare state can conveniently begin with the standards of justice and kindness. Among individuals, these prescribe relationships that are assumed to be valuable in themselves. Consequences do not count, at least not decisively. If someone restores a lost wallet to the owner we do not ask how the money it contained will be spent in order to determine whether this was an appropriate act. If someone helps save a friend from unemployment and poverty and the friend later dies of drink we do not conclude that the original assistance was unwise. Indeed, a strict sense of justice is apt to be severely indifferent to consequences and genuine kindness is often connected with a charitable

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awareness of human failings and perversities. Moreover, in personal relationships it never occurs to us that the imperatives of justice and kindness might be invalidated by coming into conflict with other values. It is taken for granted that to do all we should may sometimes require sacrifices and may sometimes be impossible.

Is there any reason why such attitudes should not prevail in the public realm? If they did, if just and kindly relationships were assumed to be worthy in themselves and not to require justification by their consequences, much of the disillusionment and confusion now surrounding the idea of the welfare state probably would not have arisen. Such has been the liberal confidence in our powers of action, however, that human suffering came to be conceived of primarily, not as a demand on thoughtfulness and common humanity, but as a problem to be solved. Thus the aim of acting justly and kindly was replaced by that of taking appropriate remedial measures. The vision of history as a compassionate sharing of human troubles became instead the vision of a process leading to the elimination of troubles. Relationships in the public sphere came to be evaluated not according to their intrinsic qualities but according to their results.

This is not to say that liberal pragmatism is wholly wrong. We cannot evade practical considerations, and justice and kindness must aim at eliminating the distress to which they respond. But to count on eliminating distress leads to a derangement of priorities. Practicality takes the place of morality. This happened; as a result the welfare state was made vulnerable to charges of being ineffective and overly costly once it faced the practical difficulties that were sure to arise.

This argument exemplifies what I believe is the most compelling objection to the whole neo-conservative movement. The case against capitalism is not primarily one of inefficiency. Here Marxism, no less than liberalism, misleads us. In the last few years we have discovered not only that the welfare state sometimes does not work very well but that capitalism sometimes does. Liberals would not have been thrown so far off balance by this discovery if they had not gotten in the habit of assuming that possessing worth and working well are about the same. But the case against capitalism rests on our communality. Even if the market were as wondrous in its working as enthusiasts of free enterprise suppose, we could not allow our relations with one another to be set and controlled exclusively by a mechanism.

Recent criticisms of the welfare state are, as noted, mostly reasonable. But they are seen to be inconclusive once the welfare state has been resituated on firmer grounds that those provided by liberal pragmatism. In a polity giving justice and kindness priority over practicality, we could admit the ineffectiveness of many welfare measures without fearing that the whole idea of the welfare state would become invalid. Our aim is not to construct a problem-free social order but to live humanely in history.

As for the conflict between social welfare and other values, like economic stability and national security, that would bring little embarrassment to a humane and soberly pessimistic liberalism. The discovery that we cannot, as was thought in the Johnson years, have all of the guns and butter we desire, is devastating only in proportion to our pragmatism and optimism. Situated on moral grounds, the ideal of the welfare state is not so fragile that it is endangered by competition from other values. Liberals may admit that there are competing values that have legitimacy. They need only insist that there is no axiomatic order in favor of other values. Even national security would be of little worth if our capacity for human decency were lost.

The implicit doubts, too, seem less imposing when viewed from a different standpoint. If the welfare state is conceived as a set of policies entailing trial and risk, and offering little prospect of permanent solutions, the disquieting image of a society in which humane relationships have been replaced by administrative routines evaporates. It does not apply to the revised ideal. Our disenchantment with material well-being also loses its relevance. Policies of material aid that are motivated by justice and kindness are not basically materialistic. And if these policies are premised on our communality, perhaps we shall be led to follow up on the bestowal of material aid with more fundamental expressions of communality—with serious communication. It is the lack of this communication—in the mass media, in urban architecture and design, in school and, more generally, in a culture encompassing all classes—that consigns present society to concerns of physical comfort and entertainment.

Rethinking the welfare state won't eliminate all opposition to that ideal. That would be neither a valid nor a realistic goal. But by reformulating their aims, liberals can defend themselves with better conscience and hence with greater strength.

"Open your mouth for the dumb," we are told in *Proverbs*, "for the rights of all who are left desolate." This is such simple and compelling advice that it is hard to think Americans would persistently reject it were it vigorously offered to them. But for that to happen leaders are needed—leaders who envision their task as that neither of merely making everything work efficiently nor of insisting on human policies without regard for practical drawbacks. Leaders are needed who realize that justice and kindness in our politics are absolutely imperative but that they solve few problems and sometimes impose difficult, and even tragic, choices. To call the roll of liberal leaders in the country today—Carter, Kennedy, Brown, Mondale—with this criterion in mind is to perceive the true nature of the present crisis of the welfare state.

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Arts and Lives

Stanley Kauffmann on films

1894-1979

"To become immortal, then to die." This is the ambition of the novelist in Godard's *Breathless*, which I happened to show in a film class on the day that the news came of Jean Renoir's death. It may not have been Renoir's conscious ambition, but he achieved it.

That's what makes an obituary comment on him seem odd—not the stale joke about "I thought he was dead" but that he has already been well and truly canonized. The actual fact of his death has been anticipated by some with a special dread. As much as five years ago, David Thomson, a warm admirer, wrote in his *Biographical Dictionary*: "Renoir will die shortly, thus releasing the grossest sentimental tributes." Tribute must be risked nonetheless. To let the death of such a man go unmarked would be, for one offense, to slight ourselves.

First, the length of his life—of *his* life, not just anyone who happens to survive for 84 years—gives him a unique place. He connected *La Belle Epoque*, from his father the painter, to the present day. He was an exponent of a view of art that doesn't promise to be generated again: art as community, from which one can make every bitter expedition into blackness—as Renoir certainly did—but which supports the expedition, strengthens its unsentimental insistence.

Second, his long career encompasses a history of change in film style. He went into films, he said, because he hated the theater. He also hated the French films of the time, the early 1920s, and was galvanized by the American films he saw. As time went on, he saw no point in not recognizing his Frenchness or, aesthetically speaking, in skirting the theatrical. Whether recognized as such or not, his most celebrated stylistic hallmark was the ingestion into cinema syntax of theatrical "place," composition, and—as possible—duration. The basis of this style is the deep-focus shot and the "sequence shot"—i.e. the shot that contains a sequence. Renoir didn't invent the idea—you can see it in *The Great Train Robbery* (1903)—but he used it as a principle, a reaction against the principle of montage which had been dominant since Griffith. To many, the idea of composition in depth was a philosophical view. André Bazin, who *mutatis mutandis* was Aristotle to Renoir's Sophocles, said it was "a cinematic style which was capable of expressing everything without fragmenting the world, of revealing the hidden meaning of human beings and their environment without destroying their natural unity." My own view is that Renoir was at least partially motivated by confidence, in himself and in film. He felt that the (still-young) film medium no longer needed to prove its selfhood by relying so heavily on a technique that no other art could employ. The film could now be sure enough of itself to translate into its own language a lexicon from another art, the theater.

Indeed, Renoir went on to include literal theatrical imagery in his films, from *La Chienne* (1931) to his last film, which was in fact titled *Le Petit Théâtre de Jean Renoir* (1970). (And in the 1950s he directed three plays, *Julius Caesar*, a comedy of his own, and Odets's *The Big Knife*.)

Third, for several reasons but mainly because of his style, Renoir had an enormous influence on other filmmakers. He is one of the five most influential directors in film history. (The others are Griffith, Eisenstein, Ford and Godard.) Out of the endless instances that could be cited, here is one—again from Godard's *Breathless*. In one sequence Jean-Paul Belmondo is in a taxi with Jean Seberg. He gets out and walks up the street away from us to speak to someone. The camera waits in the cab with Seberg, watching. When Belmondo has finished, he returns. The camera hasn't moved, the sequence has been contained in one shot. The deep-focus shot has changed the "shape" of the screen for a few moments—visual variety is not nothing—and, through composition, the shot itself has implicated Seberg, in the foreground, with Belmondo's activities in the background.

Lastly, of course, Renoir's films themselves. I'm not the best threnodist here because I have reservations about many of them. (I've seen most, though not all, of the 32 features and 11 shorts, many of them more than once.) At what I consider his height—*La Grande Illusion*, which "in" acolytes rank lower apparently because it's widely admired, and *Rules of the Game*, in which Renoir himself plays a leading role—he has added first-magnitude stars to the cinema sky. Many other of his films have beauties that only he could have given them: for instances, *The Crime of Monsieur Lange*, *The River*, *The Elusive Corporal*. But he was capable of muddling drama: I don't like his *Lower Depths* nearly as much as Kurosawa's Japanese version. And he was vulnerable to attacks of facile French camaraderie, all the way from *Boudu Saved from Drowning* (1932) to *Le Petit Théâtre*.

Still, the sum of his work outlines a mighty presence. Despite his recurrent easy sentiment and—paradoxically—to some degree because he probed depravity and cruelty, he was the prime exponent on film of unanism, the poetic movement in early 20th-century France

Films Worth Seeing

Autumn Sonata. Still here. Still the best around. If you've seen it, see it again, and see an even "bigger" picture.

California Suite and *Comes a Horseman*. Chiefly because of Jane Fonda in two very different, beautifully realized performances.

The Deer Hunter. Much excellent acting, some good direction. A serious, if imperfect, attempt to examine male-bonding in a small town and in the Vietnam war.

Superman. Could have been better, still there's some fun, and Superman himself is pleasant.

SK

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that reacted against art for art's sake and sought its sources in the lived life around it, yet without returning to pseudo-scientific naturalism and without overt "social significance." Renoir's best work is the large embrace of a loving man who sees clearly what it is that he is loving.

Inarguably, a giant is gone—now really gone, after a decade of unhappy lingering. Gone; and with the sole exception of the very different Bergman, there is no career in process that looks to have anything like equivalent size.

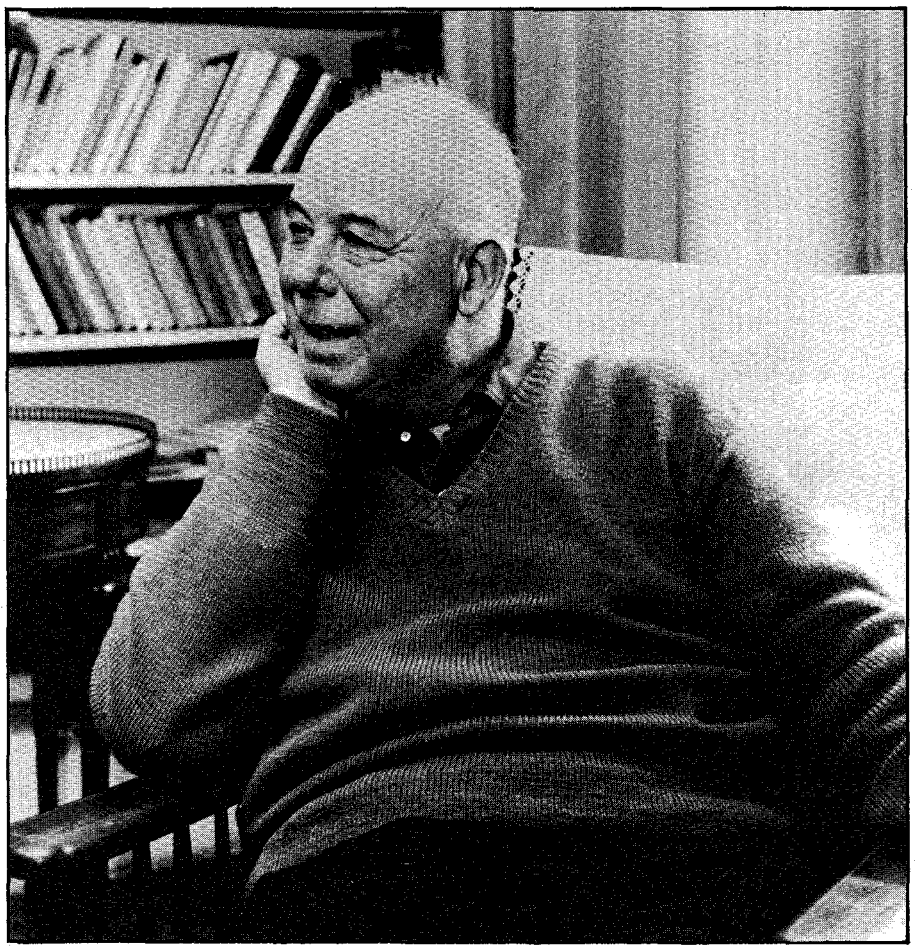
Oddments. Sherlock Holmes never dies. He isn't often well revivified—*The Seven Per Cent Solution* was one of the best attempts—but he never quite disappears either. Now there's *Murder by Decree* (20th Century-Fox), with a script by the English playwright, John Hopkins. The story is built on the familiar theory that Jack the Ripper was really the Duke of Clarence, heir (after the Prince of Wales) to the British throne, and a long, unconvincing, generally unexciting account Hopkins makes of it, alternating between splotches of violent action and dollops of supposedly freighted analysis. (And Hopkins doesn't know the difference betweeen "disinterested" and "uninterested.") Genevieve Bujold has star billing. Since she doesn't appear until well along and cannot, because of her character, be much involved in the action, we know that she is going to have a protracted "cameo." Boy, does it protract.

This is the second week in a row that we get a new English director. Last week, Michael Apted of *Agatha*; this week Bob Brown of *Murder by Decree.* Thanks a lot, England.

Just after complaining about the obtrusive extravagance of Crichton's *Great Train Robbery*, I now must complain about the obtrusive cheapness of *Murder*: the patent backdrops and glass shots. (Part of a setting is painted on glass, placed before a camera so that it fills out what was actually built.) Also, Baker Street never looked as it does here, nor did the Royal Opera House. (And would they have misspelled Donizetti?)

Christopher Plummer and James Mason are Holmes and Watson, and ought to be so again in a better script with a better production. Donald Sutherland makes his Appearance of the Month as a medium. John Gielgud and Anthony Quayle decorate the premises.

On the Yard (Midwest) was directed by Raphael D. Silver, husband of Joan Micklin Silver who directed *Hester Street* and *Between the Lines.* The husband's work is less awkward than the wife's. But the screenplay by Malcolm Braly, from a novel of his that's reputedly good, is dim. It's supposed to be a gutsy, unflinching look at prison life, yet there are only tiny peripheral hints of homosexuality and of drugs, and there's an escape by means of a hot-air balloon constructed in the prison shops. Even if such a thing has actually happened, what has it to do with the dailyness of prison life?



Jean Renoir. Courtesy of The Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive.

William Gass and John Gardner

A Debate on Fiction

This discussion between William Gass and John Gardner took place on October 24, 1978, during a Fiction Festival sponsored by the University of Cincinnati and the National Endowment for the Arts. The discussion was moderated by Thomas LeClair, who teaches at Cincinnati. John Gardner is the author of On Moral Fiction *and many novels. William Gass, novelist and teacher of philosophy, is the author most recently of* The World Within the Word, *a volume of literary criticism.*

Moderator: *Is there a use of language in fiction which is inherently moral?*

John Gardner: When I wrote *On Moral Fiction*, I was talking about a particular kind of fiction which I think is consciously moral, fiction which tries to understand important matters by means of the best tool human beings have. Many of the most academically popular writers of our time are completely uninterested in understanding these matters. They are more interested in understanding juxtapositions than in understanding how we should live. They are concerned with making beautiful or interesting or

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Romantics

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283846. Bizet: Symphony in C; Mendelssohn: Symphony No. 4 (Italian)—Stokowski, National Sym. Orchestra (Columbia)

240960. Borodin: Polovetsian Dances—and other Russian favorites (Night On Bald Mountain, etc.). Bernstein, N.Y. Phil. (Columbia)

276808. Dvorak: Symphony No. 7—*Giulini conducting* London Symphony (Angel)

230433. Dvorak: Symphony No. 9 (New World)—Bernstein conducts New York Phil. (Columbia)

262337. Elgar: Symphony No. 2—Solti and the London Philharmonic (London)*

230417. Franck: Symphony in D Minor—Bernstein, New York Phil. (Columbia)*

277392. Granados: Goyescas—"scintillating brilliance ...astonishing!"—*N.Y. Times* Alicia de Larrocha (London)

230391. Grieg: Piano Concerto; Rachmaninoff: Rhapsody on a Theme of *Paganini*—P. *Entremont*, Ormandy cond. (Columbia)

228684. Grieg: Peer Gynt Suites 1 and 2; Bizet: Carmen Suites—Bernstein, N.Y. Phil. (Columbia)

237743. Liszt: Hungarian Rhapsodies 1,2; Enesco: Roumanian Rhapsodies 1, 2—Eugene Ormandy and Phila. Orch. (Columbia)

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278564. Mendelssohn: A Midsummer Night's Dream (complete)—Andre Previn, London Symphony (Angel)

232504. Mussorgsky: Pictures At An Exhibition; Night On Bald Mountain—Ormandy, Phila. (Columbia)

213330. Offenbach: Gaite Parisienne—Bernstein, N.Y. Phil. (Columbia)

176578. Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No. 2; etc.—Gary Graffman; Ormandy, *Phila. Orch. (Columbia)*

277038. Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No. 3—Lazar Berman; Abbado cond. London Sym. (Columbia)

203745. Rachmaninoff: Piano Sonata in B-Flat Minor; Three Etudes—Tableaux; Prelude in G Sharp; etc.—Vladimir Horowitz (Columbia)*

230409. Rimsky-Korsakov: Scheherazade—Bernstein, N.Y. Phil. (Columbia)

232116. Rossini: William Tell Overture—plus works by Herold, Suppe, Thomas—Bernstein and the New York Phil. (Columbia)

274001. Saint-Saens: Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 5 (Egyptian)—P. Entremont; Plasson, L'Orch. de Capitole de Toulouse (Columbia)

285411. Saint-Saens: Symphony No. 3 (Organ)—Raver (organ); Bernstein, New York Phil. (Columbia)

234237. Schumann: Piano Concerto; Mendelssohn: Piano Concerto No. 1—Serkin; Ormandy and the Phila. Orch. (Columbia)

276279. Schumann: Piano Sonatas No. 1, 2—Lazar Berman (Col./Melodiya)

278499. Sibelius: Symphony No. 1; Swan Of Tuonela—Stokowski, National Philharmonic Orch. (Columbia)

250795. Sibelius: Symphony No. 2—Tauno Hannikainen, *The Sinfonia of London* (Columbia Musical Treas.)

191007. Sibelius: Finlandia; Karelia Suite—also works by Grieg, Alfven. Ormandy, Phila. Orch. (Columbia)

225888. Smetana: Moldau; Bartered Bride Overture, Dances; Dvorak: Carnival Overture—Bernstein, N.Y. Phil. (Columbia)

268482. Johann Strauss: Tales From Vienna Woods; Die Fledermaus Overture; others. Bernstein and N.Y. Phil. (Columbia)

275628. Richard Strauss: Also Sprach Zarathustra; Till Eulenspiegel; Don Juan—Solti conducting Chicago Sym. (London)

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229658. Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 5 (Emperor)—Serkin; Bernstein and N.Y. Phil. (Columbia)

230425. Beethoven: Violin Concerto—Isaac Stern; Bernstein, New York Phil. (Columbia)

Brahms

267963. Brahms: Piano Concerto No. 1—Artur Rubinstein; Zubin Mehta, Israel Phil. (London)

238436. Brahms: Piano *Concerto No. 2*—*Rudolf* Serkin; Szell, Cleveland Orchestra (Columbia)

233130. Brahms: Symphony No. 1—Ormandy and the Phila. Orch. (Columbia)

283788. Brahms: Tragic Overture; Variations On A Theme By Haydn; Academic Festival Overture—Bernstein and the New York Phil. (Columbia)

236810. Brahms: Violin Concerto—Isaac Stern; Eugene Ormandy and the Phila. Orch. (Columbia)

Mahler

237024. Mahler: Symphony No. 1 (Titan)—Bernstein, N.Y. Phil. (Columbia)

239046-239047. Mahler: Symphony No. 2 (Resurrection)—Bernstein and the London Symphony (Counts as 2—Columbia)*

279190-279191. Mahler: Symphony No. 5—Zubin Mehta, Los Angeles Phil. (Counts as 2—London)

Tchaikovsky

250845. Tchaikovsky: Piano Concerto No. 1—Watts, piano; Bernstein, N.Y. Phil. (Columbia)

201129. Tchaikovsky: 1812 Overture; Serenade for Strings—Ormandy, Phila. Orch. (Columbia)

231563. Tchaikovsky: Swan Lake and **Sleeping Beauty Ballet Suites**—stunning performances by Ormandy, Phila. Orch. (Columbia)

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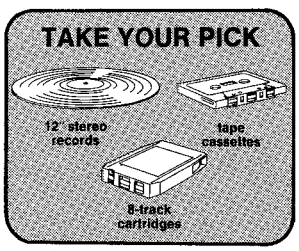

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ornate or curious objects. As for language—when I talk to you, I speak English and try to choose words, from all the possible words in the world, which seem most likely to say what I mean. If I am writing and find that one of the words that I choose is wrong, I put in a better word for my precise meaning. While English is just noises that we make with our mouths, teeth, throat, lungs and so on, fiction is an enormously complicated language. It has much more discreet, much more delicate ways of communicating. When I create a character, I want to make a lifelike human being, a virtual human being. Maybe by using the right kind of weather, I can give you a hint of what this person is. By comparing him to a bear or a rhinoceros or a spider, I can give you another hint. In other words, everything I choose in writing a piece of fiction is aimed at communication. I think that beauty in fiction is finally elegant communication, where the very form of the work helps to say what I'm trying to say. If I'm writing about an ordered universe, I write an ordered novel. If I'm talking about a tension between order and disorder, I write a novel in which the form expresses that tension. But always I'm using the tool of language to dig a hole. Other people sometimes use the tool of language to chew on.

William Gass: John's saying that a number of contemporary writers are really not interested in solving problems is a little misleading. I think the difference lies in whether they believe one can understand important human issues by writing novels; they might be so concerned with these problems that they would rather not trust the solution of them to novelists. My own feelings are, of course, that moral issues surround us everywhere, that they are deeply important, and that the survival of the human race is necessary so that parasites like myself can diddle away in corners. The question that lies between John and me here is whether or not writing fiction, rather than, for instance, doing philosophy, is a good method for such an exploration. Philosophy has its own disciplines, its own methods of coming to clarity about these issues, so the way one talks about them won't twist the conclusions. Because fiction is a method which, by its very nature and demands, deforms, I am suspicious of it.

John goes on to say that in writing he faces the problem of revision and getting his best words by constantly asking "Is this really what I believe?" I think that's fine. I don't care how the right words get on the page as long as they're the right words. But my condition is much bleaker. I don't know, most of the time, what I believe. Indeed, as a fiction writer I find it convenient not to believe things. Not to disbelieve things either, just to move into a realm where everything is held in suspension. You hope that the amount of meaning that you can pack into the book will always be more than you are capable of consciously understanding. Otherwise, the book is likely to be as thin as you are. You have to trick your medium into doing far better than you, as a conscious and clearheaded person, might manage. So one of the problems that I face is exactly the opposite of John's. John's concern is to communicate; I have very little to communicate. I'm not sure I understand what little I do have. I think it would be thin and uninteresting and hardly useful. If I did want to communicate, I would move over to philosophy and submit to the rigors that are concerned with the production of clarity, of logical order, truth and so on. In fiction, I am interested in transforming language, in disarming the almost insistent communicability of language. When you are not asserting, you are not confusing, and I would be happy to avoid that.

> *This villain, who puts words together with no intention of stating, hoping, praying, or persuading . . . only imagining, only creating . . . is to many immoral, certainly frivolous, a trivial person in a time of trouble (and what time is not?), a parasite upon whatever scrofulous body the body politic possesses at that moment. And roses are intolerably frivolous too, and those who grow them, snowmen and those who raise them up, drinking songs and drinking, and every activity performed for its own inherent worth.*
>
> **William Gass**
>
> from *The World within the Word*, "Carrots, Noses, Snow, Rose, Roses"

Does this kind of purity of creation have a moral value in the world as well as an aesthetic one?

W.G.: Sure, John wants a message, some kind of communication to the world. I want to plant some object in the world. Now it happens to be made of signs, which may lead people to think, because it's made of signs, that it's pointing somewhere. But actually I've gone down the road and collected all sorts of highway signs and made a piece of sculpture out of these things that says Chicago, 35,000 miles. What I hope, of course, is that people will come along, gather in front of the sculpture, and just look at it—consequently forgetting Chicago. I want to add something to the world which the world can then ponder the same way it ponders the world. Now, what kind of object? Old romantic that I am, I would like to add objects to the world worthy of love. I think that the things one loves most, particularly in other people, are quite beyond anything they communicate or merely "mean." Planting those objects is a moral activity, I suppose. You certainly don't want to add objects to the world that everybody will detest: "Another slug made by Bill Gass." That's likely to be their attitude, but you don't hope for it. The next question is, why is it that one wants this thing loved? My particular aim is that it be loved because it is so beautiful in itself, something that exists simply to be experienced. So the beauty has to come first.

J.G.: There's no question that an object made simply to be beautiful is an affirmation of a kind, and any affirmation of that which is good for human beings is moral. But Bill and I, in our writing, are concerned with different kinds of affirmation. When I write, I try to find out, by honest thought, moment by moment, psychological response by psychological response, what it is that I can affirm as true and good. I think, for example, it's better to be an American democratic person than a headhunter. I think I think that. When I work it out in a novel, I might change my mind a little. But in the process of discovering what I really believe, what I can say yes to: "yes, I affirm that, that's good, that's helpful to people, that makes it possible for individuals to live in society," in the process I create an effect.

By telling a moving story, I've led the reader to an affirmation of the value I have come to find that I can affirm. The difference between what I am doing and what a philosopher is doing is that my activity leads to a feeling state, whereas the philosopher has only cold clarity. I'm after an affirmation of how to live, but it's a difficult affirmation. Again and again people read my books and misunderstand the endings; they think the end of *Grendel* is a curse. It's such a marginal affirmation that maybe it might as well be a curse. There isn't an awful lot one can affirm, but I try to get to the affirmation that I can really

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believe and that will move people. I'm trying for an affirmation that has something to do with how to live; Bill and other writers like him are trying for an affirmation of just living. A guy walks along the street and sees this magnificent sculpture made out of signs and his day is better for it. But what I want the guy to do is continue past the signs and go do his job.

W.G.: One of the problems that I find with John's view is that it might lead you to say harsh things about great writers, a terrible thought. Suppose you have a writer who clearly inspects what he believes and ends his great long work by saying "You must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on." That's about as affirmative as Beckett gets, and there are other writers who, in following a process of being honest about what they can affirm, find only "going on" left and are not even sure of that without writing another book to make sure they're still going on. Gaddis hasn't made a habit of hooray. Since I think, quite independently of any theory, that Beckett is one of the greatest writers of this period, I'm wondering, John, if your view allows you to regard him in that way?

J.G.: I don't think that's a problem because one is terribly moved by Beckett and one does go on, and one even feels he has a reason for going on, although the reason may be in the technical sense absurd. There are other writers who would persuade you not to go on, that everything is nonsense, that you should kill yourself. They, of course, go on to write another book while you have killed yourself. If we look back through the history of literature, those writers have not been the ones who have been loved and who have survived. Again and again we're moved by Achilles, we're moved by the best of Shakespeare, Chaucer and the others we keep going back to. Writers who give us visions to which we say, with all our unconscious minds as well as our conscious minds, "That's just not so," we don't read.

I'm not saying that other people shouldn't make wonderful sculptures; I'm saying they shouldn't be mistaken for the big tent, the most important kind of work. The theory that I'm proposing says, fundamentally, that you create in the reader's mind a vivid and continuous dream. The reader sits down with his book just after breakfast, and immediately someone says, "Hermione, aren't you coming to lunch?" One instant has passed although 200 pages have passed because the reader has been in a vivid and continuous dream, living a virtual life, making moral judgments in a virtual state.

. . . The real problem with this argument is that Bill Gass is a sneaky moralist. His books end in magnificent affirmation. I'm arguing against his theory, but his books don't follow it.

Bill, what about this vivid and continuous dream?

W.G.: It's rather imaginary. In music, let's say, the motion of the work comes from the performance. That's true also in the theater. So if there's an interruption, or your mind goes blank, or someone rattles a bag, you miss something and that's too bad, it's lost. In reading fiction, however, the motion that moves the text comes from the reader. Now the writer can indicate or try to indicate how that motion should go and at what rate. But I don't think that anyone writes a book now supposing that the reader will sit down and read 200 pages through in a continuous dream. He's going to, in fact, stop, brush a fly off his nose, go back to the first page, read it over, skip, look around for the juicy parts. The book is more like a building which you're trying to get someone to go through the way you want him to. The experience of a novel can occasionally be what John describes. I remember it happening when I was 12 or so reading *Boy Scout Boys on the Columbia River*.

J. P. Donleavy, Ron Sukenik, James Purdy, Stanley Elkin, John Barth, and a good many more of our writers concentrate, to a greater or lesser extent, on language for its own sake, more in love, on principle, with the sound of words—or with newfangledness—than with creating fictional worlds . . . But the fact remains that the search for opacity has little to do with the age-old search for understanding and affirmation. Linguistic sculpture at best makes only the affirmation sandcastles make, that it is pleasant to make things or look at things made, better to be alive than dead.

John Gardner
from *On Moral Fiction*

J.G.: You're right if you're talking about the concert hall, but with a record you can go back. And when you go back, you remember what came before, you know where you are, and you know where you're going. If a novel is plotted, if you have the actualization of the potential that exists in a character in a certain situation, then the argument of the novel—the movement of the plot, the development of the characters in their response to problems—leads you through the novel. What argument is to philosophy, plot is to fiction. Most philosophers set up a syllogism and move steadily through it. You have a feeling of profluence, of forward flowingness. When a novel has a plot, it doesn't matter if the reader goes to chapter eight, then ducks back to chapter five, and then goes forward again. Finally, the ultimate apparition, the ultimate dream of the novel, is a continuous one. When you decide as a writer that the novel is just a house you're trying to get somebody to go through in various ways, you have broken faith with the reader because you are now a manipulator, as opposed to an empathizer. If the novelist follows his plot, which is the characters and the action, if he honestly and continuously proceeds from here to here because he wants to understand some particular question, the reader is going to go with him because he wants to know the same answers. On the other hand, if the writer makes the reader do things, then I think he puts the reader in a subservient

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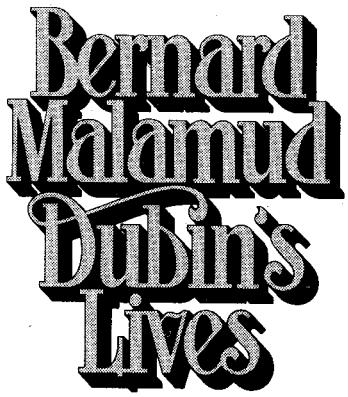

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position which I don't like.

Let me elaborate with the plot of a story someone told me once. A woman has had a perfect marriage. After her husband dies, she finds a walnut box of perfectly labeled feathers in the garage. She finds out that all his life he has had a secret hobby, and at that moment she begins to wonder how come he didn't tell her? The next time she hears a conversation about her husband, she's going to listen in a different way. The next time her kids talk about him, she's going to listen in a different way. The next time she meets his 30-year-old secretary, she'll look at her a different way. We're on to a real problem, which is human doubt, human faith, and as long as we're on that, we don't want the author pushing us around. We want someone honestly, gently taking us through an exploration of this situation. There is an act of faith, whereas when the author manipulates the reader he is solipsistic in the worst sense: he's not in a love relationship with the reader.

W.G.: I didn't mean the manipulation of the reader when I compared reading to going through a building. The kind of response to novels that John is talking about certainly was appropriate 200 years ago, when there were lots of novels written in that form. There are just not many of them being written that way anymore. When Fielding comes to the end of *Tom Jones*, for example, I suspect that he expects us to remember about as much of the first chapter as we would of that early part of our life, if we were thinking back. Not every detail, not every adjective attached to a noun in a certain way. In someone like Joyce, quite the contrary is true. He wants an experience that can happen only when the reader moves constantly about the book. The notion of the space in which this kind of book is constructed is quite different from the notion of the time through which the Fielding work moves. While I don't mind Fielding's having written the way he wrote, John begrudges some people writing in this newer or different way, in which the kind of attention the reader is expected to pay to the page transforms the way the work exists.

J.G.: I think we both agree that we're trying to create something that the reader will love. Is it possibly the case that the fiction you're advocating, Bill, is simply not lovable, that it simply doesn't hook readers? You can quickly say, "But the most sophisticated reader. . . " I'm

BY AL LEBOWITZ'S POOL

1.
Imagine this: three beach balloons of three
Sizes, sometimes spinning and sometimes not,
Float in the transparent water table
Reflecting light blue light up from the floor.
They slightly sink into their own images
Mirrored below themselves as bubbles a bit
Elongate gaining and losing their various colors
According as they move between sun and shade,
Shade of the sailing cloud, shade of the oak
And sycamore and apple standing over
Or bending above, and through the dappled light
Respondingly they drift before light airs,
Sailing in independence that is yet
Relation, unpredictable if not
Quite free, mysteriously going about
Their balancing buoyancies sometimes puffed
On some bits of V-shaped wake; like a mobile
By Calder, only more so—linkages
Invisible, of wind and the watching mind,
Connect and vary their free-hand form. The world
Is a misery, as it always was; these globes
Of color bob about, a mystery
Of pure relation that looks always right
Whatever it does. A steel-blue-black wasp
Rides on one ball awhile, flies to the next,
Possibly playing, possibly not; by law
Any three things in the wide world
Triangulate: the wasp, and Betelgeuse,
And Our Lady of Liberty in the harbor; if
It's any comfort to us, and it is.

2.
Sunshine and rain at once, and the clear pool
At once lights up its light and shadow show,
Doing its free-hand random perfect circles
That on a nucleus of bubble and drop
Grow outward and silently intersect
Without collision or consequence, as if
They lived between the spirit and the world,
And evanescing are replaced by others
In patterns that repeat themselves beneath
In light and shade that seem to ripple away
Between the surface and the floor and dazzle
Again against the sunshine side. Dame Kind
Is doing one of her mighty and meaningless
Experimental demonstrations, but
Of what? Playing, perhaps, with the happiness of
A couple of groups of aperiodic crystals
Like thee and me, who are old enough to know
That if these moments could not pass away
They could not be, all dapple and delight.

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3.
Two girls in the pool, two old men out of it
Observing with an implicit kind of love
Mildly distinguished from lechery, much from lust,
The slender strong young bodies sudden as fish
To dive and swerve in the dazzled element
And surface (no longer much like fish at all)
Smiling, their long hair asparkle as with stars.
The old men, relaxed into their middle ages
And comfortable in the flesh for yet awhile,
Whom generation has had its will and fill of
And nearly if not quite let go, smile back
Over their drinks and banter with the girls
In a style that allows courtship and courtesy
To show their likenesses and keep their distance,
Just glancingly at risk; and the young women
Kindly respond in kind. No one, praise God,
Is going to get in trouble this time around.
It is late Sunday morning by the pool,
A Sunday morning late in summer time,
A Sunday morning of the middle class,
And no one, praise God, is even like to drown
Before it's time to go indoors for lunch.

4.
Likely the last of the summer's storms goes by,
And even the water in the pool looks lank,
With leaves already dead upon its flat
Spinning a while and sinking waterlogged,
A couple of struggling bugs doing the same.
Even the heat begins to ember out,
The year has perceptibly started down again,
And summer's wondering stillness is on the move
Over ourselves as well; a leaf comes down
And alights without a splash; another year
Of the little lot has passed, and what have we
Squirreled away more than this summer's day
With the electric storm hammering down on it
Releasing life? The banked furnace of the sun
With reliquary heat returns in splendor
Diminished some with time, but splendid still.
Beside the pool we drink, talk, and are still,
These times of kindness mortality allows.

5.
An afternoon alone beside the pool
Observing, or more like peaceably taking in,
Recording, stillness made of rippling wave
And waving leaf, of shadow and reflected light,
And silence able to draw into its dream
The siren singing on the avenue,
The crying of a child two houses down,
The aircraft laboring through four thousand feet
On the way elsewhere. Stillness and silence still,
Shimmering frequencies of waterlight
Reflected from the planes of leaf above
And from the screening panels of the pool,
So many white oscilloscopes whereon
The brimming water translates into light.

Reflection and reflexion, lovely words
I shall be sorry to let go when I let go:
Reflected light, reflexion of the wave;
For things reflected are more solemn and still
Than in themselves they are, it is the doubling
Perhaps that seems to bring them nearer thought;
Could we reflect, did water not reflect?

Enchanted afternoon, immune from time,
Illusion's privilege gives me the idea that I
Am not so much writing this verse as reading it
Up out of water and light and shadow and leaf
Doing the dance of their various dependencies—
As if I might daydream my way again
Into the world and be at one with it—
While the shadows of harder, more unyielding things
Edge steadily and stealthily around the pool
To translate the revolving of the earth
About itself, the spinning ambit of the seasons
In the simple if adamant equation of time
Around the analemma of the sun.

Howard Nemerov

not sure that's true. In the academy we teach Pynchon instead of Trollope. About Trollope there's nothing to say because it's all clear. On the other hand, every line of Pynchon you can explain because nothing is clear. So the academy ends up accidentally selecting books the student may need help with. They may be a couple of the greatest books in all history and 20 of the worst, but there's something to say about them. You get an artificial taste in the academy. The sophisticated reader may not remember how to read; he may not understand why it's nice that Jack in the Beanstalk steals those things from the giant.

W.G.: I suspect, John, that you want not things that will be loved but things that will be promiscuous. If you had a daughter to send into the world, would you want everybody to love her? I might be at my winery turning out bottles of Thunderbird which everybody loves. It wouldn't give me much satisfaction. It's not just that books are loved, but why they're loved. If you've given them the properties that make them worthwhile, then it doesn't matter if no one does love them. Frequently very few people do, or a work will go unobserved for years.

Do the two of you write from different motives? We've heard love mentioned several times. I know that Bill Gass has used the word anger. Do the motives for your writing produce the differences in the kind of fiction that you write?

W.G.: I have a view I'm sure John wouldn't agree with. Very frequently the writer's aim is to take apart the world where you have very little control, and replace it with language over which you can have some control. Destroy and then repair. I once wrote a passage in which I had the narrator say "I want to rise so high that when I shit I won't miss anybody." But there are many motives for writing. Writing a book is such a complicated, long-term, difficult process that all of the possible motives that can funnel in will, and a great many of those motives will be base. If you can transform your par-

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ticular baseness into something beautiful, that's about the best you can make of your own obnoxious nature.

J.G.: I agree with almost everything Bill says except the nonsense about human nature. I think human beings are a little lower than angels and a hell of a lot more important. One does take the world apart and put it back together, but I would express it differently. You write the book to understand and get control of in yourself things that you haven't been able to control and understand in the world. When you have the kind of problem that will come to you in repeated dreams, you work it out on the page. Maybe it's an illusory understanding, but I think it helps you live. I think with each book you write you become a better person. It's certainly true that a great many famous writers, Marcel Proust for instance, were awful human beings, were much better in their writing. The reason is, I think, that when one is writing a book one gets to think over a nasty crack, and to gentle it and put it in a way that's not quite so cutting. Bill might say it's more elegantly expressed. "I want to rise so high that when I shit I won't miss anybody" is so well said the meanness is partly muted. It becomes a joke, a kind of self-mocking, so it's not saying the same thing that the writer might say if drunk and angry. I believe that we revise our lives in our work and with each revision we find a mistake we don't have to make again. I also think people become gradually slightly better people as they write books. That may not be true, but that's my conviction.

W.G.: Do you think Alexander Pope got better as a person?

J.G.: I think that Bill values a great deal of literature that I don't value. Alexander Pope expresses a mood that we all have—meanness—and he expresses it very well. But one ultimately says, "I don't feel like reading Pope tonight. *Kojak* is on; I'll get my meanness quick." One always reads through the mean writers with a certain amount of fascination, the same way you watch the female praying mantis eat the male. But that doesn't mean you go home every day and watch the praying mantises.

W.G.: Some of us do.

The concept of character in fiction is one you differ on. Would you talk about your notion of character?

W.G.: It's complex. I'll try to simplify it very quickly. A character for me is any linguistic location in a book toward which a great part of the rest of the text stands as a modifier. Just as the subject of a sentence, say, is modified by the predicate, so frequently some character, Emma Bovary for instance, is regarded as a central character in the book because a lot of the language basically and ultimately goes back to modify, be about, Emma Bovary. Now the ideal book would have only one character; it would be like an absolute, idealist system. What we do have are subordinate locales of linguistic energy—other characters—which the words in a book flow toward and come out of. A white whale is a character; mountains in *Under the Volcano* are characters. Ideas can become characters. Some of the most famous characters in the history of fiction are in that great novel called pl losophy. There's free will and determinism. There's substance and accident. They have been characters in the history of philosophy from the beginning, and I find them fascinating. Substance is more interesting than most of my friends.

Now why would one adopt such awkward language—why not just talk about character in the traditional sense? The advantage is that you avoid the tendency as a reader to psychologize and fill the work with things that aren't there. The work is filled with only one thing—words and how they work and how they connect. That, of course, includes the meanings, the sounds, and all the rest. When people ask "How are you building character?" they sometimes think you're going around peering at people to decide how you're going to render something. That isn't a literary activity. It may be interesting, but the literary activity is constructing a linguistic source on the page.

J.G.: I obviously don't agree with Bill on all that. It seems to me a character is an apparition in the writer's mind, a very clear apparition based on an imaginative reconstruction or melting of many people the writer has known. The ideal book has to have more than one character, because we know a character by what he does: what he does to other people, and what they do back to him. Bill wants to avoid the reader's "filling in," but when we read J. D. Salinger, for instance, we understand many things about his characters that aren't in the book because we know what people mean when they make the gestures that Salinger's made-up people make. So we're all the time seeing more of the picture than is given. In the good novel, the reader gets an apparition, a dream, in which he sees people doing things to each other, hurting each other or exploring each other or loving each other or whatever, and a tiny linguistic signal sets off a huge trap of material which gives us a very subtle sense of these imaginary people. It's true that one can analyze them as words on a page, but I have never cried at the fate of free will or determinism in a good philosophy book.

Bill has argued that it's wrong to be frightened by a character in a book or to cry at the death of a character. I say it's not. I say a book is nothing but a written symbol of a dream. If someone jumps at me with an axe in a nightmare, I scream and I have every right to scream because I believe that person is real. In the same way, when the dream is transported to me by words and I see that character leap out at me with an axe, I have every right to believe that my head is going to be knocked in. I think it's very useful to talk about character in the traditional ways. Contemporary philosophy has reconstructed the world into its own words while distrusting the words that we've used over and over and over. Meaning exists in literature because of the way thousands of generations of people have used words. With just the slightest tap, you ring the whole gong of meaning. I'm more interested in the gong than the tap. I think Bill concentrates on the technique of the tap.

. . . First it matters to him that [a novel] is elegant and well-done and that it has other characteristics I think are perhaps secondary. But given two well-done books, one of which strikes him as absolutely truthful while the other is not what he would affirm in his life, Bill would take, he says, the one that he thinks is true.

W.G.: Yes, but that's just wanting thickness to experience. If, for instance, I play golf for my health and to persuade some client and because I'm hooked on the symbolism of getting a ball into a hole, that's better than playing golf just to have a good score. But ultimately, whether you play golf well or not is determined by how well you score—your performance—and that's what ought to be used as the aesthetic measure. If a beautiful book is a source of virtue and a source of truth—fine. That's jolly. The composer of such a work would be a fine philosopher, a noble saint, and an artist. But he's not a good artist because he's a fine philosopher or a noble saint.

. . . There is a fundamental divergence about what literature is. I don't want to

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subordinate beauty to truth and goodness. John and others have values which they think more important. Beauty, after all, is not very vital for most people. I think it is very important, in the cleanliness of the mind, to know why a particular thing is good. A lot of people judge, to use a crude example, the dinner good because of the amount of calories it has. Well, that is important if you don't want to gain weight, but what has that got to do with the quality of the food? Moral judgments on art constantly confuse the quality of the food. I would also claim that my view is more catholic. It will allow in as good writers more than this other view will; John lets hardly anybody in the door.

J.G.: I love Bill's writing, and I honestly think that Bill is the only writer in America that I would let in the door. For 24 years I have been screaming at him, sometimes literally screaming at him, saying "Bill, you are wasting the greatest genius ever given to America by fiddling around when you could be doing big, important things." What he can do with language is magnificent, but then he turns it against itself. Our definitions of beauty are different. I think language exists to make a beautiful and powerful apparition. He thinks you can make pretty colored walls with it. That's unfair. But what I think is beautiful, he would think is not yet sufficiently ornate. The difference is that my 707 will fly and his is too encrusted with gold to get off the ground.

W.G.: There is always that danger. But what I really want is to have it sit there solid as a rock and have everybody think it is flying.

J.G.: Bill Gass is quoted as saying that his ambition in life is to write a book so good that nobody will publish it. My ambition in life is to outlive Bill Gass and change all of his books.

Books Considered

The Habit of Being: Letters of Flannery O'Connor edited, with an introduction by Sally Fitzgerald

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $15)

"I don't deserve any credit for turning the other cheek as my tongue is always in it," Flannery O'Connor wrote to a friend. She had a way of doing the expected with unexpected wryness, of both following and mocking the mores of small-town Christian life. She grew up quietly in Milledgeville, Georgia, a patrician town that has not forgotten it was the state's last confederate capital, a town that knew her as the daughter of Regina Cline O'Connor, whose family had been one of the most distinguished in the county for more than 100 years. She politely remained an obedient daughter, one who kept her good humor when at 25 she was stricken with lupus, the wasting disease that confined her to her mother's farm for nearly 14 unbroken years until it killed her. She agreeably became for many of her readers the Catholic who died cheerfully in her faith. And in silence she wrote those quiet stories where violence so unexpectedly erupts, exploding all the values of obedience, politeness and faith.

The tension between O'Connor as Catholic daughter and southern gentlewoman and O'Connor as writer bristles out of the stillness in which she lived. Her composure may be disappearing as a female norm now that women are expected to be vocal about their turmoil. Yet it still survives in the South where women are taught from childhood to bury their passion or rage, to conceal inner turmoil in a facade of feminine mildness. As Flannery's mother said to me years ago, "I was brought up to be nice to everyone and not tell anyone my business." And in the dogwood groves and white-columned homes of Milledgeville you can still find the result: the impenetrably sweet and unbelievably nice Southern Belle.

O'Connor would fill her short stories with such ladies in various stages of decline. One of them is the grandmother in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" who wants to return to the six-columned plantation she knew as a girl. She tricks her son and grandchildren into turning off the main highway back into the Georgia hills. There they encounter the Misfit, a murderer who is also a gentleman. The Misfit apologizes for not being better dressed before a lady, and, while his assistant murders her son and grandchildren in a nearby glen, he gets into a polite conversation with the grandmother. "You don't look a bit like you have common blood. I know you must come from nice people," she remarks as she hears the gunshots. "Yes mam," the Misfit agreeably replies. "God never made a finer woman than my mother and my daddy's heart was pure gold." But the Misfit is uncertain about what God did. He can't decide whether Christ really did raise the dead. Seeing his discomfort, the grandmother says:

'Why you're one of my babies. You're one of my own children!'

Then she reached out and touched him on the shoulder. The Misfit sprang back as if a

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snake had bitten him and shot her three times through the chest. Then he put his gun down on the ground, and took off his glasses and began to clean them.

Was Flannery O'Connor Misfit or Lady? Or, rather, how did she manage to be both, to sustain her own ritual of politeness against the pressure of explosive feelings? Sally Fitzgerald, a friend of Flannery's, has chosen not to raise such questions. She limits her introduction and commentaries to brief, affectionate accounts of the facts of Flannery's life. Gathering the massive correspondence of a woman whose illness dictated that friendships be maintained largely through the mails, Fitzgerald has performed an extraordinary labor of love and brought to all of us who are captivated by O'Connor's fiction the gift of Flannery's voice. These letters offer no striking literary theories, nor any statements inconsistent with what is already available in O'Connor's book of essays, *Mystery and Manners*. What they reveal is O'Connor's sensibility, shaped and hardened in the isolation of her life on her farm.

O'Connor's "habit of being" was a self-discipline that outdid the reserve of the southern ladies she loved to mock. She could keep her fatalism and her pain in the grip of her extraordinary sense of irony: "Everything funny I have written is more terrible than it is funny, or only funny because it is terrible, or only terrible because it is funny." In her life, as her letters show, she would withdraw from the terrible into the role of a witty Georgia kid and cast herself as a cartoon character. When her disease hit her badly, she could joke in letters about her "awrthritus," or express concern for a friend's "lupus epizooticus," and describe herself as an oddball with a "watermelon face." It is not surprising that after a bad bout of her disease, she would paint a portrait of herself next to a peacock looking like a suffering, proud adolescent in a wide straw hat.

O'Connor's cheeriness in the face of her decline is admirable. But it also marks her older, more essential malaise, the trouble of a shy girl who was always most secure in a life structured by her mother. One of the horrors of her disease was not that it changed her life, but that it prevented her life from changing at all. Perhaps it dictated that she would remain, like so many of the people in her stories, frozen in an extended childhood dependent on her mother. Her childhood friend, Betty Boyd Love, told Sally Fitzgerald that she did not think O'Connor's illness caused any "repression of instinct," and certainly many of Flannery's friends accepted her cheeriness at face value. O'Connor knew better. When one of her closest friends, who wished to be identified by Fitzgerald only as "A," challenged her pose, O'Connor joked about her own

photo of Flannery O'Connor by Joe McTyre

limitations with a humor one can only admire for its self-confident honesty:

What you say about there being two sexes now brings it home to me: I've always believed there were two but generally acted as if there were only one. The things you have said about my being surprised to be over twelve, etc., have struck me as being quite comically accurate. When I was twelve I made up my mind absolutely that I would not get any older. I don't remember how I meant to stop it. There was something about "teen" attached to anything that was repulsive to me.

O'Connor could be sharply hilarious about books rooted in the sensitivities and nuances of what are generally known as "adult relationships." Of one of Updike's novels she wrote, "I just don't like people that are all that sensitive. I just never know if the thing they're being sensitive about is *there* or not."

O'Connor saw sentimentality as lack of clarity about the nature of life. In her novels and stories, the social workers, or do-gooders who believe the torments of her "misfits" can be alleviated through therapy and understanding, are always disproved. "To expect too much is to have a sentimental view of life and this is a softness that ends in bitterness. Charity is hard and endures," she wrote to Cecil Dawkins, a fellow Catholic and writer. She extended to others a deep and distinctive love. To "A" she wrote of a mutual friend:

She may be basically irreligious but we are not judged by what we are basically. We are judged by how hard we use what we have been given. Success means nothing to the Lord, nor gracefulness. She tries and tries violently and has a great deal to struggle against and to overcome. The violent bear it away.

She judged human worth by how much it costs, a fitting standard of value for a woman whose talent and temperament had passed the test of a slow and violent disease.

Grace hits the characters in O'Connor's stories with the force of a mugging, powerfully capturing O'Connor's equation of sanctity with violent, leveling experiences. John Hawkes, O'Connor's friend and correspondent, wrote, quite perceptively, that O'Connor's propensity for violence made her, as an author, come out on the side of the devil. She affectionately disagreed and reasserted her Catholicism in an interesting letter to him. But her Catholicism was marked by the same extremes of conventionality and rebellion that marked her fiction. She could, for example, write to her priest for permission to read André Gide whose books were then on the index of proscribed literature. But she could also express her unconventional vision of sanctity in a letter to Sister Mariella Gable: "In the Gospels it was the devils who first recognized Christ and the evangelists didn't censor this information. They apparently thought it was pretty good witness." O'Connor, as a writer, became "pretty good witness" for the murderer, the oppressed, the psychic cripple, the freak—for those from whom life had extracted terrible costs, for all of those who are martyred by silent fury and redeemed through violence.

It was the brutality of her disease that stripped O'Connor's life to her vocation as a writer. To Robert Lowell and Elizabeth Hardwick who generously befriended her, she wrote, "I have enough energy to write with and as that's all I have any business doing anyhow, I can with one eye squinted take it all as a blessing." She was blessed in her willingness to pay the price of her originality. On receiving a letter from a publisher disparaging her first novel while holding out the possibility of publishing it, she spiritedly replied:

I would not like to work with you. . . . I feel that whatever virtues the novel may have are connected with the limitations you mention. I

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am not writing a conventional novel and I think that the quality of the novel I write will derive precisely from the peculiarity or aloneness of the experience I write from.

There were, of course, those who understood that as a person and a writer she was a complete original. Alfred Kazin, who met her at Yaddo in 1948, encouraged her early in her career. Robert Giroux admired her first novel and became her publisher and lifelong friend.

During the last months of her life, O'Connor wrote her greatest stories, "Revelation," and "Parker's Back." As she cast her life into the mold of a hard-nosed Georgia wit, so she cast her death into the unsentimental humor that has always been part of the American mind. Near the end, she wrote that she heard "celestial music." For Flannery O'Connor the celestial chorus wouldn't simper or put on airs. "Clementine is what it renders," she wrote, "when I am weak enough to hear it. Over and over. Wooden boxes without topses, They were shoes for Clementine." What better welcoming tribute could there be than the song of the hard-nosed tragicomic lover who continues: "How I missed her, how I missed her, how I missed my Clementine, till I kissed her little sister, Oh my darling Clementine."

There has been no little sister in American letters to replace Flannery O'Conner. Winner of a posthumous National Book Award for her collected stories, she has emerged as one of the most gifted writers of recent decades. I am grateful to Sally Fitzgerald for bringing her back to speak to us again, as she spoke to her friends—as the Georgia hick, the witty writer, the Catholic, the southern lady—the woman of discipline whose many selves added up to genius.

Josephine Hendin

Josephine Hendin is the author of *The World of Flannery O'Connor* (Indiana University Press) and *Vulnerable People: A View of American Fiction Since 1945* (Oxford).

Herbert Hoover: A Public Life by David Burner

(Knopf; $15.95)

The lack of a sophisticated, integrated methodology among traditional American historians has meant (among other things) that presidents have received a disproportionate amount of attention, and hence praise or blame. As a result, several of them have become multinational industries worthy of being included on *Fortune*'s list of the top 500: one thinks immediately of Lincoln, Washington, Jefferson, the two Roosevelts, Wilson and the Kennedys.

Anyone who invested a small but regular amount in Herbert Clark Hoover Debentures between 1932 and the present could now bank a significant profit (and most assuredly qualify for capital gains benefits). No great fortune, to be sure, but a comfortable cushion for retirement, including relaxed first class trips to the scenes of Hoover's activities in Australia, China, Russia, Western Europe and the United States.

A good many people, including Hoover, contributed to the improvement in his stock. It seems proper, however, to credit Richard Hofstadter's essay in *The American Political Tradition* with prompting people to dig the old certificates out of the trunk in the attic (though Hofstadter later discounted his own prospectus). Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.'s unimaginative attack in *The Crisis of the Old Order*, a downwardly volatile version of Democratic party rhetoric during the 1930s, was probably counter-productive. Schlesinger's head on the sleeve bias was by then well known; and, in any event, anyone as bad as his Hoover *must* be interesting in his own right. More recently we have had Joan Hoff Wilson's short biography, *Herbert Hoover: Forgotten Progressive*, and the host of articles and essays cited in her bibliography. Now comes David Burner's study based on research in recently opened manuscripts and a thorough review of the traditional sources.

Burner has not written an orthodox biography. His book is difficult to classify, but it suggests to me, in the best sense, an effort to extend the idiom invented by Richard Current in his classic intellectual and policy study of Henry L. Stimson. Burner lacks Current's sophistication, subtlety and style (there are some strange lapses in the use of the language for a book published by Knopf), but he does two enormously important things for which I salute him.

First, he provides the most straightforward and detailed account of Hoover's public life that we have. We now know where he was, what he was doing (and how he was doing it), a significant amount of what he was thinking; and we have in addition a revealing (if not sufficient) review of what other people thought about him *at the time*. I think Burner is seriously weak, conceptually and organizationally, on foreign policy; but his chapter on "The Reform Presidency" is magnificent. Schlesinger Jr. and a good many others will have to make some thoughtful revisions before they authorize their boxed paperback editions.

Second, Burner prompts us to raise the central questions about Hoover—and therefore about 20th-century American capitalism and liberalism. There is a fundamental difference, however, between our *raising* of these questions and his *posing* of them, and Burner would have written a great work if he had conceptualized and posed them himself. Instead he forces his readers to do that work. Let us do so forthwith.

Burner begins by integrating Hoover's childhood experience—the death of parents, his own brush with death, his repeated exposure to serious illness, and his shuttling about within an extended family—with his serious Quaker morality and behavior. To this add the discipline and confidence of doing science at Stanford, and later succeeding as an engineer, and top it all off with the strong toddy provided by reading Veblen. The result, we are told, is the reciprocal reinforcement of rational individualism, Quakerism and Veblen.

That is a powerful brew, and Burner says that Hoover "made not only a virtue out of it, but an ideology—heroic individualism, the self-reliant man expressing himself through technological mastery and personal accomplishment." But then Burner becomes more than a bit fuzzy and ultimately contradictory. Hoover, he says, was not a technocrat—I agree—but neither was he introspective—I disagree. He was something of an elitist—probably—and yet "subversive

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of upper class interest"—unquestionably. On the latter point, for example, he "railed" against the "political bankruptcy" of both major parties; repeatedly remarked that "the only trouble with capitalism is capitalists. They're too damned greedy"; increasingly after 1922 warned about the dangers of fascism in the United States; disliked Churchill and Hitler—as well as Stalin—for all the right reasons; and said bluntly and publicly during World War I that the central evil of "unbridled individualism" is "the lack of responsibility in the American individual to the people as a whole." Shades of Christopher Lasch on the culture of narcissism.

There is much more of that kind of thought and action in Hoover's public life (concerning blacks and women and civil liberties, as well as the St. Lawrence Seaway, Grand Coulee Dam and other public works); and Burner is delightfully wry in quoting various progressives and liberals who fought and defeated Hoover's proposals on the grounds that they were unnecessary, dictatorial or otherwise subversive of individualism. As I said earlier, parts of this book are marvelous. But Burner never comes to terms with the central issues that Hoover posed or confronted.

Near the end, Burner asks this question: "What was it, then, that made this humanitarian and organizer so slow to react in the face of the most obvious necessity?" He gives two answers: "his tenacious adherence to a philosophy of voluntarism"; and his failure to "evoke community, call [America] to self-awareness, as Franklin D. Roosevelt did."

While superficially plausible, those explanations raise more questions than they answer. Roosevelt certainly roused the country to action, for example, but America was a deeply divided and contentious society until the attack on Pearl Harbor. And the remark about Hoover not only seems to discount his increasingly vigorous proposals for governmental action, but slides over the reason he was so reluctant to embrace state capitalism, unlike Roosevelt.

All this is terribly frustrating because Burner touches upon three of the four crucial matters about Hoover only to slip away like a Mohammed Ali willing to float like a butterfly without stinging like a bee. Early on, he remarks sotto voce that some of Hoover's pronouncements sounded "like the calls to self-help in the service of the nation that we hear in present day China." That is wild: a capitalist proposing to subvert capitalism! But the best Burner can do with it is to return with this pathetic last sentence: Hoover had "an instinct to transcend the orthodoxies of American social and political life."

Second, Burner glimpses the potential insight in thinking about Hoover in terms of John Quincy Adams. His list of the similarities between the two men is very stimulating, but he fails to explore *any* of them. He also omits what is the most illuminating point, their shared commitment to an organic, republican community; and he misses the real reasons why Adams and Hoover feared the consequences of their successors. Adams knew in 1828 what Jackson would admit in 1937: everybody doing their own thing would create chaos . . . and ultimately civil war. Hoover knew in the 1920s what Roosevelt would never admit: that using the state to save capitalism would create a monster.

Third, Burner is persistently blind to Hoover's ongoing serious thought about fundamental matters. He initially asserts that Hoover "had no use for introspection or contemplative indwelling," but soon makes a point of telling us that as early as 1909 he was working on "a book of business or social philosophy." One can criticize the book that emerged, *American Individualism*, just as one can point out the weaknesses of his earlier volume on *Principles of Mining*, but both issued from considerable introspection and contemplation.

By way of moving on to the fourth point, you can make a better case—if you want to "save" capitalism—that Hoover thought too deeply and too well. Most progressives and liberals (and a surprising number of so-called radicals) have damned him for not using the state to save capitalism. But none of those critics has asked—let alone confronted—what that did to capitalism and the culture it created between 1828 and 1928.

Hoover was thinking, talking and worrying about the relationship between state capitalism and fascism at least as early as 1921-22; and if you do not want to duck the question by defining fascism in terms of the Third Reich, then you must deal with Hoover's analysis and critique—and his refusal to embrace state capitalism as the next higher stage of liberal democracy. Hoover understood the nature and the dynamics of the military-industrial-consumer complex about the time that Eisenhower was off in Kansas getting high on tanks with Patton.

The fourth point involves Joseph Schumpeter instead of Thorstein Veblen. I would be dumbfounded to learn that Hoover had read Schumpeter, but that is not the issue. Schumpeter argued that capitalism would fail because capitalists would increasingly ignore or dishonor their avowed principles and ideals. Hoover made the same point in a different idiom: "they're too damned greedy." But the Quaker orphan from Iowa and the sophisticated middle-European intellectual look pretty good in 1979—as well as in 1929.

As for the superficially wise talk comparing Hoover and Carter: it is not only inane, it is an insult to Hoover.

William Appleman Williams

William Appleman Williams is president-elect of the Organization of American Historians. He has recently published *Americans In a Changing World* (Harper & Row).

The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art by E. H. Gombrich

(Cornell University Press; $38.50)

The time has come for a substantial treatment of ornament. Ever since the great Austrian reformer Adolf Loos initiated an official ban with his essay of 1908, *Ornament and Crime*, architects and designers have purged buildings, furniture, bridges, machines and instruments of the impurities of decoration. By now, however, discontent with the glass cubes of the International Style and the geometry of Bauhaus implements is coming out of the closet—if

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only as a nostalgic return to the ostracized ornamentations of the Art Nouveau and its more extravagant forerunners. In conformity with this change of taste historians and theorists are due to reevaluate ornament on its own merits rather than as a mere spillover from the "true" arts: painting sculpture, architecture. E. H. Gombrich's new book is the first systematic treatise on the subject since the pioneer monographs of Alois Riegl in the 1890s.

Ornament is a topic that properly arouses a smile. As one leafs through Gombrich's volume with its more than 400 striking illustrations, one sees man at play, the *homo ludens*. One sees the cheerful fantasies of shape, remote from the grave responsibilities of the representational arts and rarely touched by the anxieties of the human condition. Viewed in this fashion, the subject could not ask for a more congenial expert than Professor Gombrich. Whatever his prodigious erudition as a researcher, his work has always been distinguished by a taste for the marginal, the capricious and the witty; and in his writing the particular combination of a Viennese acuity of intellect with the genius of the English language for saying things simply and concretely deserves three stars in the gourmet's guide for anything he publishes.

Gombrich is at his best as a chronicler telling the story of ornament in the explicit sense of our own heritage, that is, the development from the discovery of the ancient Roman interior decorations at the time of the Renaissance. He describes the reverberations of these discoveries in the grotesques of Mannerism and the Baroque, the rocailles of the Rococo palaces, the antithesis provided by the Classicism of the Empire, and the renewed flourishing of prosperous surfaces in the bourgeois culture of the 19th century. In his discussion of this multifarious history Gombrich pays particular attention to the principal problems arising from ornamentation. He shows with detailed evidence how resistance developed not against exuberance as such but against the loss of meaning, which left buildings, furniture and machinery encumbered with pretentious shapes. It was the cheap replicas of traditional grandeur, supplied by mass production, that first raised the issue of honesty and created the split between form and function. We learn that Ruskin's love for the spontaneity of invention made him decry the mechanical repetition of decorative patterns, and we are led through the scholarly controversy between those who showed how basic motifs like the palmette or the acanthus developed historically from one another and those who were believers in spontaneous generation, by which the same shapes spring up independently in different cultures. There is a good chapter explaining how complex patterns were developed from geometrical schemes; and psychologists interested in visual perception are offered a dazzling variety of historical examples.

But there is another side to Gombrich's book, just as there is another side to ornament. While ornament exists as the effervescent play of endless variation and the unrestrained inventiveness of merry craftsmen, it also is the revelation of pure form in opposition to the intricacies of nature. This more austere aspect of the subject is equally indispensable for the understanding of art in general, and Gombrich commits himself to it by ambitiously entitling his book *The Sense of Order*. But it is here that he lets us down. For Gombrich is no Pythagorean. The conception of an orderly cosmos, overgrown by the contingencies of history but revealed in the laws of science and the harmonies of art is irksome to him. In his view it was never probable that nature is simple: "While the Gestalt approach fastens on our perception of order I would draw attention to the reverse, our response to disorder."

This outlook prevents him from recognizing the sense of order, inherent in all organic behavior, as a manifestation of the lawfulness of the physical universe and its physiological ramifications. Instead he adopts an approach put forward by K. R. Popper, which demotes the sense of order to a kind of Darwinian trick of strategy, "somehow encoded in the nervous system," by which man and animal find their way through the contretemps of daily existence: evolution has programmed creatures to walk a straight path until the facts direct them to dodge. The sense of order becomes a formula devised to beat the odds in an unpredictable world. Gombrich realizes of course that this strategy can work only in an essentially orderly environment, but he does not draw the obvious conclusion and therefore is unable to acknowledge ornament as the realization of universal order.

There is a tendency, already evident in Gombrich's earlier *Art and Illusion*, to

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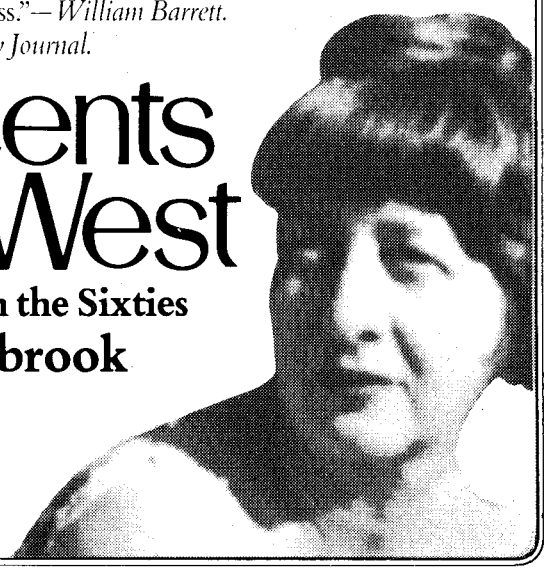

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espouse explanatory principles that prevent art and the human spirit from showing their best. The most basic fact of human experience, we are told, is that "delight lies somewhere between boredom and confusion"—which is like defining heaven as the avoidance of hell. Gombrich concedes that "there are invariant dispositions in the human mind which account for the development of certain common features"; nevertheless he constantly refers to the "force of habit," which takes man at his least intelligent and is not much of an explanation at best. Borrowing from information theory he discusses the communications of art and especially music as the ratio between the expected and the surprising and thereby reduces aesthetic substance to the inferior notion of "novelty." It should be the privilege of persons who partake *ex officio* in the revelations of art to point out to psychologists, communication engineers and similar practitioners that their concepts and methods are still way below what is needed to account for the peaks of human creation. Instead, more nearly the opposite propensity manifests itself in Gombrich's recent work. One constantly feels like asking the biblical question why anyone would light a candle to put it under a bushel.

While Gombrich offers so much instruction along the byways of art, he fails to place his subject in its larger context. By separating order, conceived as a purely formal principle, from meaning, conceived essentially as the subject matter of representation, he neglects to present order as a fundamental device for conveying meaning. How can one interpret the importance of order without showing that it figures prominently in every work of art whatsoever—not just as the way to make the statement readable but as the indispensable counterprinciple to the dynamic theme of the work? Only when art in general is located between the poles of order and complexity can ornament be understood as the outcome of art approaching the pole of order. Only then can we truly see what happens when the elements of pure geometrical shape reach toward the animation of life by adopting the subject matter of leaves and flowers, leaping deer and frolicking fauns; whereas conversely the danger of petrification threatens painters and sculptors as they come too close to the chilly formalism of unmodulated order. Only within such a framework would it be possible to approach the surely pertinent problems of how ornament relates to "abstract" art or, for example, to the frightening assemblies of shapes in the art work of schizophrenics.

As I was reading, there kept appearing in my mind the great prototypes of ornament, the golden splendor of the mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna, the frozen tides of motion pervading the Baroque churches, the lucid geometry of the arches, cubes, and medallions in the Florentine interiors of Alberti and Brunelleschi, and I had to realize that although pertinent reference to all these monuments is not missing, they are not truly present in Professor Gombrich's treatise. Is it not the secret of the best interpreters of art that through the concepts they select, the aspects and perspectives they describe, and the reverence of their attitude, they conjure up as a persistent backdrop for their disquisitions those great images which stop our smiles and our cleverness and make us watch in silence?

Rudolf Arnheim

Rudolf Arnheim is professor emeritus of the psychology of art, Harvard University, and at present a visiting professor at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. His most recent book is *The Dynamics of Architectural Form* (University of California Press).

Foreign State Enterprises: A Threat to American Business by Douglas F. Lamont

(Basic Books; $10.95)

The message is in the title: America's economy is being menaced by the growth of enterprises owned by other governments. When private US firms meet these government-owned entities in competition abroad, the Americans are outmatched; the foreign firms, directed and supported by their governments, are part of something dubbed a nexus (plural form, nexuses), a force too powerful for US firms to deal with on their own. In fact, some of these foreign-owned enterprises, such as British Petroleum, Compagnie Française des Petroles, and the Canadian Development Corporation, now seem bent on seizing control of vital American resources. Meanwhile, the public sits oblivious to the threat, blinded by a sweet-talking State Department, which wants to keep the issue quiet and is ready to violate US law to gain its end.

What is the United States to do? America, says Douglas Lamont, must lay aside its outmoded inhibitions about government ownership, and must begin fielding a team of enterprises of its own, prepared to do battle with the foreign horde. In addition, the basic American principle must be to give foreigners only as good as we get. No foreign-owned firm that is part of a nexus is to have any more rights in this country than its own government extends to US firms abroad. In fact, any foreign restrictions on the production and sale of our goods and services "should be met in kind."

If only the book were dealing with a non-problem, it would be tempting to give it the back of one's hand. But in spite of the aura of hysteria and confusion that the book gives off, the problems on which it touches are real enough. And therein lies the book's destructive potential: once the problems are recognized as genuine, the temptation to man the barricades may prove irresistible.

In fact, Lamont deals with several different problems of the first importance, not all of them having to do with state-owned enterprises.

One problem stems from the multinationalization of business, whether state or privately owned. One half or so of the world's industrial output is in the hands of enterprises that have substantial producing facilities outside their home base. As a result, these enterprises are exposed to the influences of more than one government. And being multinational in structure, anything that such an enterprise does in response to the influence of any government cannot fail to have its repercussions on its activities in other countries.

The consequences are disconcerting. When the French government offers the

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Ford Motor Company a subsidy to produce a new line of motors in France, Ford is bound to alter its production plans in other countries—in Britain, in Spain, even in the United States or Canada. And when Pennsylvania offers Volkswagen a subsidized facility in this country, the consequences are bound to ripple outward in the opposite direction. The problem in this instance is not one of state ownership or of the sinister nexus. It arises out of the ineluctable fact that, wherever international investment is involved, at least two governments can influence the outcome.

Lamont would be right if in rebuttal he insisted that state ownership adds a special dimension to the problem. (I say *if* he insisted, because now and then he pins the nexus label on a privately-owned firm such as Pechiney-Ugine-Kuhlmann or Mitsubishi). Governments commonly assume that the enterprises they own will respond more swiftly and unqualifiedly to their commands than the private enterprises in their jurisdiction. So, most of the time, does the author. But what are the facts?

The facts, as usual, are as varied as the enterprises themselves. The officers of British Petroleum, for instance, would be slightly startled to discover that they were a link in a British nexus, and that their stewardship over Standard Oil of Ohio was being exercised as if the enterprise were the extended arm of Her Majesty's Government.

The British government's big problem with BP in the past has been quite the opposite: it has been unable to influence the company's policies in spite of owning half the company's shares. Not that all the state-owned enterprises of Britain are independent; Britain's other state-owned oil company, BNOC, is on a much shorter leash in its responses to governmental orders. And no one could have the slightest doubt that if the Russians were to establish a Lada assembly plant in Canada, the Canadian subsidiary would respond with even greater certainty to its government's commands.

Who responds to whose commands, as I suggested earlier, is becoming a terribly tangled question. In some cases, as the government of France has learned, it is easier to get Alcoa to act in accordance with French official plans than to get Pechiney to respond. The only generalization one can make, therefore, is that the multinationalization of business has created some nasty problems; that these are getting worse; and that state ownership of such enterprises adds an exacerbating feature to an already tangled development.

The author's give-'em-hell proposals for dealing with this thorny issue seem at times to draw their inspiration from the Group of 77—the United Nations caucus of developing countries—and at other times from the redoubtable John Connally, ex-secretary of the US Treasury. History tells us that other approaches may be possible—less satisfying to the glands perhaps, but less likely to plunge us into a regressive cycle of beggar-thy-neighbor actions among the United States, the countries of western Europe and Japan.

The fundamental choice, as usual, is between the beguiling principle of reciprocity and the effort to create general rules of behavior applicable to all comers. The United States confronted that choice squarely over 50 years ago, when it elected to abandon what is technically known as conditional most-favored-nation treatment—a kind of reciprocity approach in trade—for the unconditional variety of such treatment. By that time, we had learned the hard way that "reciprocity" is a synonym of tit-for-tat; that it pushes nations irresistibly toward the lowest common denominator of behavior.

Over the last 30 years, the US government has led a laborious effort to find rules on which the principal nations could agree, governing international trade, money and investment. A huge exercise that is just winding up in Geneva—the so-called Tokyo Round of trade negotiations—is the latest manifestation of that historical approach.

To be sure, the US government probably will not exercise the same leadership role in the future as it has in the past. That phase of history may be ending. Perhaps, therefore, nations will be pushed back to "reciprocity"—to a constrained form of economic warfare—in spite of themselves. But before we settle for that dangerous game, we had better be clear that we have exhausted all other alternatives.

Raymond Vernon

Raymond Vernon is Clarence Pillon Professor of International Relations at the Harvard Center for International Affairs and the author of many books.

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The Course of Dioxin Contamination

Thomas Whiteside

This powerful investigative report sets forth what is known—and not known—about TCDD, the dioxin that is one of the most toxic substances on earth. Tracing its poisonous and enduring trail, ranging from the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam to the disaster that struck Seveso, Italy, in 1976, to the leakage of deadly wastes out of the Love Canal and other chemical-dump sites—and to the continued widespread spraying of forests and rangelands here with the dioxin-contaminated herbicide 2,4,5-T—Whiteside makes an urgent case for stringent regulation of such super-toxic contaminants.

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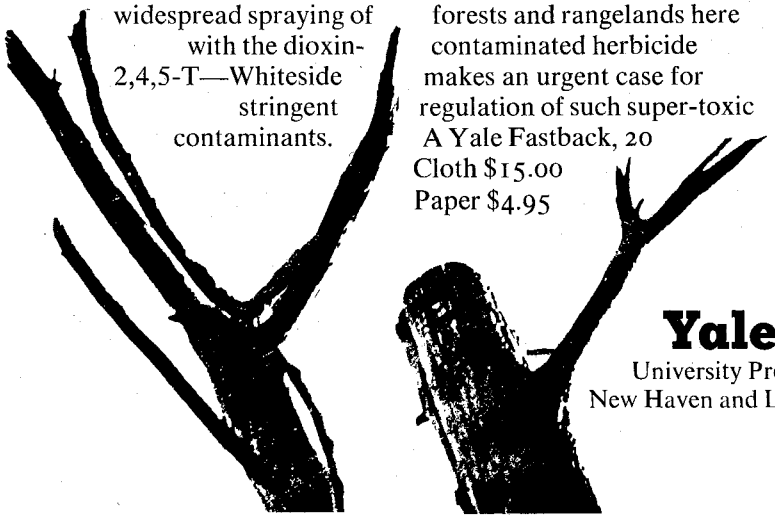

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The Tribes of America
by Paul Cowan
(Doubleday; $10.95)

Turning Points
by Ellen Goodman
(Doubleday; $10)

"The social sciences seem to be expropriating literature from one of its most characteristic functions, the investigation of manners and morals," Lionel Trilling remarked in his 1954 essay on David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*. A quarter of a century later, journalists—mostly young, often blue-jeaned—seem to be roving about in novelists' territory alongside the sociologists. Sooner or later, these reporters feel it's their turn to graduate from newsprint to hardcovers. This year Paul Cowan, a writer for *The Village Voice*, and Ellen Goodman, a syndicated newspaper columnist, have made their moves out of the wastebasket and onto the shelves.

From different perspectives, Cowan and Goodman examine social changes that have earned the 1970s infamy as the "Me Decade" and the era of factious pluralism. The two journalists aim to report some of the real news behind the epithets. Goodman focuses on individuals, on the personal changes that have resulted from "the greatest change of our time—the evolving roles of men and women." Cowan is interested in the "tribes" of America—the nation's ethnic, religious, professional and racial groups—and their struggles to make their way in a nation that is not the melting pot it once seemed. The country he discovers is populated by "frightened, embattled people . . . [unable] to see past their stereotypes of each other and glimpse the hopes and confusions that link them."

Cowan took to the road in the early 1970s and immersed himself in the lives of troubled tribes across the US; among them were West Virginia's fundamentalist "creekers" and more cosmopolitan "hillers" warring over the introduction of progressive textbooks in schools, black Chicagoans looking for direction in the wake of the civil rights movement, coal miners striking, Jews opposing a housing project in Forest Hills, blacks and whites battling over busing in Boston, and poor, Orthodox Jews surviving in New York City. His reports first appeared in *The Village Voice*, and after return visits in the past two years, he has revised and reorganized those articles.

The result is not a comprehensive argument about the problems of pluralism; Cowan aims instead to bring characters and predicaments to life, to become "involved in human beings, not abstract issues . . . [with people] fighting to preserve their culture and their psychological and physical turf." In 10 days at the Kildav coal camp, for example, he amasses the thick social and cultural detail he believes essential to understanding the politics of the strike. During briefer visits, he gathers enough particulars to evoke a place, an atmosphere, in which we can imagine people feeling real fear, anger and resentment in the course of their days: women stopping in at the Forest Hills Woolworth's expecting a racial squabble over a shoplifting incident, teenagers frittering away days in a sub shop to avoid violence at South Boston High School. Instead of applying stock liberal ideology to the conflicts he surveys, Cowan looks to local "tribal" circumstances for a possible "groundwork for change."

There's not a trace of sociological jargon or flat observation in *Tribes of America*. But at times the personal voice of Cowan the liberal Manhattanite struggling to overcome his own tribal perspective is as unwelcome as another table of numbers might be. His earnest account of his personal odyssey toward sympathy with other tribes—which was appropriate to share (in smaller doses) with his *Voice* audience (his fellow tribesmen)—can sound preciously provincial in a book that he hopes will cross New York City lines. It distracts from the central task Cowan announces for himself, and for other writers and political movements: "to find ways of interpreting the tribes of America to each other . . . to help them get to know each other so that they can attain the goals they share instead of engaging in a destructive, never-ending war."

Ellen Goodman already has fans from many tribes across the country who share at least one habit: flipping past the real news to get to her weekly column, "At Large." They shouldn't rush out to buy *Turning Points*. Goodman spent several years interviewing and reading widely "on the subject of change"—perhaps somewhat indiscriminately, we might conclude from the book she has written.

There are no characters here, only names and the barest outline of more than 150 case histories, forgotten as soon as the page is turned. Neither are there any settings; all I could imagine was Goodman rushing in with a tape recorder and rushing out, a few juicy tidbits coaxed from her subjects and caught in her machine. Banal generalizations, couched in distracting terminology, fill in between the interviews. She announces a "scale of change," with "lightweight" change marking one end, "heavyweight" the other. The echo of the boxing ring does not help to elevate her insight from the platitudinous. A hint of space terminology doesn't get her any higher: there is a "Shuttle Zone," she says, that we traverse when we experience change. Standing at either end of this zone are two kinds of people who sound like varieties of electronic equipment, "Change Resisters" and "Change Innovators." In between are the majority "Middle-grounders," who, predictably enough, feel ambivalent about the unknown that lies ahead and the known that's left behind.

There isn't much news here, no complicated "sense of the actuality of society" that Trilling looked for. Cowan digs up details and offers modest personal generalizations—enough for newsprint, perhaps a little thin between hard covers. It's not curiosity or concern that either writer lacks. But there's some confusion, understandably, about what kind of literature they're trying to write. A few generic conventions might have imposed more shape and given more depth to their observations. As it is, Cowan mentions the influence of Dos Passos, Dreiser, Sinclair; Goodman

"WE OWE the mid-twentieth century a whole lot: nuclear power, penicillin, silicone women, Water Piks. And adolescence. I mean: adolescence as myth, basic human right, growth industry, nation almost. Tom Jones grew up, but he was never noticeably teen-aged: he went from child to young man, no sociological parenthesis in between. You can't imagine Dante or Swift saying, 'I had a grim adolescence.'"
— Keith Mano in the current issue of National Review.

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speaks of her work as a "storybook of change, in which many characters tell their own tales." But they're not writing fiction, or sociological studies, or, for that matter, journalism, the one genre in which both writers have found a voice and a vision.

Ann Hulbert

Learning Disabilities: A Family Affair by Betty B. Osman

(Random House; $8.95)

Last September brought some hope at last for parents of children with that most mystifying and frustrating problem, dyslexia (or "learning disabilities," or "minimal brain dysfunction," as it is variously called).

Not that anyone had any clear idea of what causes this problem. Scientists are still debating why so many children with normal or superior intelligence, as well as normal eyesight and hearing, cannot distinguish between up and down, or right and left; why they confuse such words as "was" and "saw"; and why some of them are hyperactive as well. Five times more boys than girls are affected. Some cases clearly run in families, and a geneticist recently pinpointed the chromosome involved; others might result from birth trauma, certain food additives, poor coordination between the brain's two hemispheres, or a myriad of unknown factors.

Nor is there any real cure for this neurological mix-up. However, when intensive and specialized training is started early enough—preferably before the age of seven—most of these children can be taught to compensate for their difficulties and, in effect, to overcome them.

The feeble hope came from a new federal law, the Education For All Handicapped Children Act, which specifies that as of September 1978, all handicapped children between the ages of three and 18 must receive a free and appropriate education. It was the first time that children with learning difficulties were included in such requirements. In most parts of the country, these children have been grossly neglected, with special services going only to the more obviously handicapped such as the blind or mentally retarded. There is a whole literature of protest against this neglect by parents who describe their agonizing trek from doctor to doctor, and from teacher to teacher, in search of help. Very often the pediatricians did no more than make soothing remarks ("don't worry, he'll grow out of it,"), while the school principals refused to provide any extra help or even to accept the children.

While parents will have the law on their side from now on, they will still need to fight to get specialized training for their children. *Learning Disabilities: A Family Affair* provides a good deal of information to help them. For example, a special appendix explains what parents should look for in the new "individualized education programs" which the school systems will have to develop for each child, and which parents must sign.

One gets the feeling that this is not Betty D. Osman's main interest, however. An educational therapist who practices in Westchester County, New York, she seems most involved in helping parents to feel good about their children and making their home lives easier. She has much to offer along these lines. Unfortunately she often lapses into some atrocious educational jargon—e.g., "When language is significantly delayed or immature for a prolonged time, it may signify that the child is having difficulty understanding, processing, or expressing verbal material." She is also quite bland and obviously anxious not to say anything that might offend any professional group. When she writes in her own voice, though, she comes through as a very sensible woman who can give parents a wealth of practical advice.

She is particularly good at dealing with the tensions that arise in nearly all families of language-disabled children. Such children are often irritatingly clumsy, sloppy, unable to understand directions and hyperactive. They also suffer a great deal from having been made to feel stupid or incompetent in school, which leads to new behavior problems. It is easy for parents to blame each other for this. A father may refuse to believe his son can't learn to tie his shoelaces or to read, insisting that "he could do it if he tried." Osman describes one such father who resented the time his wife spent with the boy's homework "and even suspected that she might have created Roger's disability by spoiling him." There are problems with siblings, too. "It's not fair," they argue when the dyslexic child gets extra attention or privileges. Osman's reply for such cases: "Equal treatment is not necessarily fair. 'To each according to his need' might be a more appropriate slogan."

The parents' real dilemma, as Osman sees it, is to preserve the home as their child's refuge and haven, while not ignoring his difficulties and making sure they are treated.

An enormous amount of effort is required, year after year, for these children to make progress; parents generally have to involve themselves in

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their education very deeply, both at home and at school. They must provide structure and routine for them in both places (an open classroom is an invitation to disaster for such children). They must make sure the children are getting enough extra tutoring, as well as the right kind of instruction (*not* the "look-say" or "whole-word" method of teaching reading, for example, since these children have a poor visual memory). They must also give them a great deal of extra practice at home, and help with their homework. It's a tough, continuing struggle for parents, who should err on the side of providing too much help, including typing papers if necessary, rather than too little. (One useful bit of advice: the sooner these children learn to type, the better for all concerned.)

Besides describing these problems and explaining how parents can use the new law to their best advantage, Osman includes practical information about IRS regulations and lists of organizations that can help parents in every state. Her book is hardly a rousing call to action, however. Although she points out that children's learning disabilities are generally diagnosed quite late, after the children have suffered years of failure in school, and although she recognizes that this failure produces serious emotional problems for them, she lacks the sense of outrage and urgency expressed by some of the parents. She is far more interested in smoothing over family conflicts than in getting children over the hump of learning difficulties at an early age.

With a little bit of luck, however, the new law on education for all handicapped children will focus more attention on these children's earliest years. If this leads to early and specialized training for them, it could prevent many of the emotional problems with which this book is most concerned.

Maya Pines

Maya Pines is the author of *The Brain Changers* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich), and *Revolution in Learning: The Ages from One to Six* (Harper & Row).

Good as Gold
by Joseph Heller

(Simon & Schuster; $12.95)

Joseph Heller has written an exuberantly funny saga on "the Jewish Experience in America." If you're wondering *whose* Jewish experience, then you're in the same quandary as Bruce Gold, Heller's 48-year-old protagonist. Gold, however, a professor of English at City College and a man with an eye for the main chance, does not let his ignorance of the Jewish experience in America, or even his doubts about the metaphysical status of such a thing, stop him from contracting to do a book on the subject for an editor friend of his, who may stand for one of New York's leading literary impresarios, nor from agreeing to run chapters from his book in a small intellectual monthly edited by yet another of his old Columbia classmates, Maxwell Lieberman. When we learn that Lieberman has already written his autobiography we can have no doubt about *his* identity: he plainly stands for a celebrated intellectual of the neo-conservative persuasion, and his neo-conservatism is so patently the philosophy of the courtier, slavering to be heard in Washington and on Wall Street, that he is nearly the most repellent character in a novel full of naked egotists.

Lieberman's philosophy is of a piece with the nickname he has adopted—the quintessentially goyish cognomen "Skip." "Skip" Lieberman has abandoned all dignity in his rush to be assimilated, and Bruce Gold holds him in contempt for this. But Bruce sacrifices nearly as much himself when another of his Columbia friends, Ralph Newsome, a close adviser to the president, hints that he might have a job high up in a post-Nixon administration. Gold, it seems, wrote a favorable review of the president's book, *My Year in the White House*; the president was flattered. More decisively, he was impressed with Gold's gift for the empty phrase, and in the Washington pictured in this novel there can be no stronger qualification for high office than that.

The plot involves Gold's descent on Washington where, after abandoning his Jewish wife for a propitiously lean Protestant princess named Andrea Pugh Biddle Conover, after enduring the anti-semitic vituperation of Andrea's dotty father, a member of the Virginia gentry with political influence, and after serving on a committee that meets only to adjourn—after this education in the sinuosities of Washington politics Gold is surprised at "how much lower he would have to go to rise to the top." The top, Ralph Newsome hints, might even be the job of secretary of state, and, according to a theory Gold has worked out with the help of his father, that would make him, Bruce Gold, the first Jewish secretary of state.

And what of Henry Kissinger? Julius Gold has a theory about that. After reading the notorious Oriana Fallaci interview with Kissinger—it appeared in *The New Republic*—in which Kissinger compared himself to a lone cowboy, the old man has come to the conclusion that Kissinger could not possibly be a Jew:

> *'No siree. He said he was a cowboy, didn't he? A lonesome cowboy riding into town to get the bad guys, didn't he? All by himself. Well no cowboy was ever a Jew.'*
>
> *'Not,' said Gold's stepmother, 'on your life.'*
>
> *'Show me one,' challenged Gold's father. 'Shepherds, maybe. No cowboys.'*

The risk Gold runs in trying to become the first real Jewish secretary of state is that he will be forced to act like Henry Kissinger, and that would mean his moral destruction.

For Bruce Gold hates Henry Kissinger. He refers to him familiarly as "that fat little fuck." Heller's use of obscenity is a deliberate rhetorical strategy, an effort to rescue Kissinger from the obsequious politesse of Joseph Kraft and James Reston, to put this low character in a low verbal context. It is an act of radical moral imagination, equivalent to the Freudian method of referring to sexual matters in the most explicit way possible so as to strip them of their spurious mystery and power. But Heller does not rely on obscenity alone to take Kissinger's proper measure: Gold is accumulating notes for a devastating book about Kissinger (it will prove, among other things, that Kissinger is not a Jew) and Heller has him ruminate on his subject in sentences studded with Yiddish words, as if to oppose the simple values of the im-

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migrant generation of Jews to Kissinger's arrogance and opportunism. And Heller's animus is nothing if not informed. He has searched through the rich record of Kissinger's vanity and callousness and has filled the novel with Kissinger's more damning utterances as well as with adverse comment on Kissinger from such sources as Anthony Lewis, Woodward and Bernstein and this journal. Those who hold Kissinger in high esteem will find this book impossible to read. Those, on the other hand, who are of Gold's conservative opinion that—

Kissinger would not be recalled in history as a Bismark, Metternich or Castlereagh, but as an odious shlump *who made war gladly and did not often exude much of that legendary sympathy for weakness and suffering with which Jews were regularly credited.*

—these readers will take perverse delight in every scarifying page. *Good as Gold* is a cultural event. A major novelist has taken on our greatest celebrity with all the power of wit and language at his command, and perhaps not since Tolstoy eviscerated Napoleon—Solzhenitsyn's Lenin is too mild to be in the comparison—has a central historical figure been so intimately castigated by the Word. Score one for literature.

Good as Gold works as a series of contrasts between Washington and New York, Gentile and Jew, the nihilism and opportunism of politics and the viciousness and strangled love of family life. The Washington scenes are brilliant political satire, but the scenes of the Golds at dinner belong to the heights of comedy. Gold's family includes: "four older sisters who seemed like 450 when they flocked around him with their questions, solicitudes and advice"; Julius Gold, a despotic narcissist who hates Gold and who keeps discovering new Jewish holidays to postpone his annual winter retreat to Miami; and Gussie Gold, Julius's second wife, who adds a touch of real insanity to the prevailing amiable dementia. Gussie is the kind of bitter loony Heller fans will recognize from *Catch-22*:

Often she called him to her side just to tell him to move away. Sometimes she came up to him and said, 'Cackle, Cackle.'

Gussie is forever knitting, and it is a measure of what Gold has to put up with from his family that when he asks her *what* she is knitting, his father tells him not to ask *personal* questions.

These family dinners are torture for Gold. Yet underneath the casseroles of kugel and noodle pudding, the platters of potato salad and the endless bowls of matzoh balls, beneath the practiced taunts, the feverish intimacy of the Gold family, there are some abiding values at work which Heller wants us to recognize and, I think, celebrate. Gold's brother Sid is the best example of what these values entail.

Sid, a prosperous businessman, is no hero; he's just a good man. He hated his father, yet bailed the old man out of his last business, and still pays the bills for his Florida retirement. He resented his

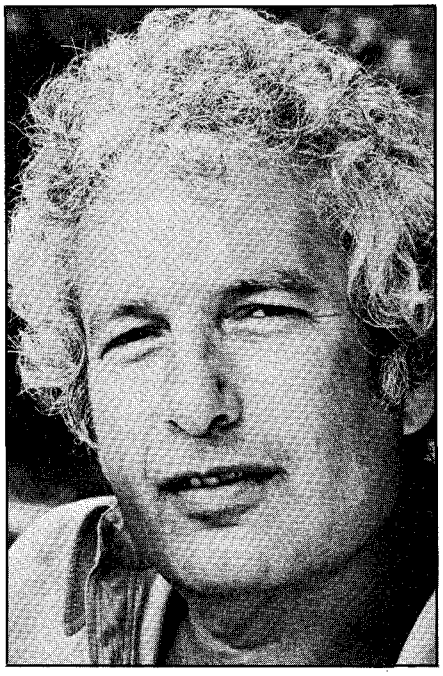

photo of Joseph Heller by Thomas R. Koeniges

smarter kid brother but paid his way through Columbia nonetheless. Sid has done his duty. In a scene as delicately naturalistic as the rest of the novel is manically stylized, Bruce gets Sid to talk about his life and, inevitably, he is self-deceived. How else could he have made those sacrifices?

'Sid, you must have resented me a lot back then, didn't you?'

'Oh no Bruce,' Sid said. 'Why would I do that, I was always very proud of you.'

'I had such an easy time of it after you had such a hard one, I got those good marks in school and was able to go to college.'

'I'm glad we were able to send you,' said Sid. 'No, I didn't mind that.'

'Didn't you mind having to take care of me?' Gold asked softly. 'I was the youngest boy and the family made such a fuss over me. Sid, it's OK to say yes. People in families often dislike each other for much less than that.'

'No, I didn't mind.' Sid spoke with his face partially averted from Gold's fascinated gaze.

Sid has been caught with strange women in hotels all over North America, yet he hasn't divorced his wife, and the check of this merely formal morality is one of the salient differences between the Jews and the Gentiles in this novel. "Golds don't get divorced." "We have deaths sometimes, no divorces," declares old Julius. *They* are the ones who go in for adultery. *They* get the divorces: "I've been married to Ellie ever since my divorce from Kelly," one of them, Ralph Newsome, says to shocked, suggestible Gold. "There was that legal problem of my annulment from Nora, but Nellie. . . ." It is Newsome who suggests that Gold get rid of Belle, his Jewish wife, and marry Andrea Biddle. Gold is tempted. He and Andrea even get engaged. But to his distress, he discovers that she plans to continue her adulterous career even after they are married. That might be OK for Biddles but not for Golds—unless, that is, Bruce can somehow cease being a Jew. One night, while asleep in Andrea's arms, he approaches that charmed state. He dreams that he is Van Cleef and Arpels. He is that glittering 5th Avenue store and all the well-bred people enter him and say nice things about him: "You are not a listener anymore," they whispered. "You are not," they lullabied, "even a Jew." This dream shows clearly enough where he's headed. It's the classic path of the hero of romance, down into the underworld where metamorphosis and the loss of identity threaten and allure. Gold is recalled to New York and to himself, however, by Sid's death. The novel ends with Bruce sitting *shivah* for Sid, having refused Newsome's final cryptic offer to be the first Jewish secretary of state.

On the way home from Sid's funeral, Gold beholds an amazing and, we can't but feel, symbolic sight. In the schoolyard of a Brooklyn yeshiva some boys in skull caps and sidelocks are playing baseball. Gold stops his car and walks over for a closer look just as an argument breaks out among the players:

As Gold watched, the catcher, a muscular, redheaded youth with freckles and sidelocks and a face as Irish or Scottish or Polish as any Gold had ever laid eyes upon, moved wrathfully toward the pitcher with words

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Gold for a minute had trouble believing. "Varf!" shouted the catcher. "Varf it already! Varf the fucking ball!"

Baseball and Yiddish, they make an unlikely synthesis, but at least it is a synthesis, not an assimilation. I take it as one of the meanings of this rich and finally very traditional novel that all of us need the values that rise out of the Jewish experience in America to keep us human—to prevent us from becoming Kissingers of the personal or the public life.

Jack Beatty

King of the Jews by Leslie Epstein

(Coward, McCann & Geoghegan; $10.95)

There is an extraordinary scene in *King of the Jews* in which the Judenrat (Jewish council) of a Polish ghetto deliberates whether and how to turn over 50 Jews to the Nazis. Now, here is a moral dilemma to conjure with. If the Judenrat fails to deliver the Jews, the Nazis will swoop down and carry off many more than 50, or will burn out the ghetto entirely. On the other hand, how can the Judenrat do such a thing? Sending Jews to their death, even if death is called "the farms," is hardly the business of the Jewish leadership. Suggestions roll in: send the sickest Jews, or send the oldest, or pick the victims by lot. A rabbi protests that Jewish law forbids collaboration of this sort with enemies. Perhaps, then, an effort should be made to soften the Nazis' hearts with prayer, or to circulate a petition appealing to world opinion. Someone says not to worry: "A miracle will definitely happen first." A second rabbi observes that in a few scattered passages Jewish law *does* permit collaboration with enemies, under duress. Perhaps Jewish criminals worthy of death should be sent. However, a new objection: who is so blameless as not to be worthy of death?

And at this point one recognizes the scene: it is a talmudic debate in full fury. Indeed, since this is the central scene of the novel, one begins to suspect that *King of the Jews* is that unusual specimen, a talmudic novel. Henry James said that landscape is character: in *King of the Jews*, disputation is the landscape, and very nearly the plot as well.

There are, to be sure, actual characters dotting this disputation. The characters have colorful names (colorful names are a trademark of Epstein's) but their real individuality is as types: the Hypocritical Rabbi, the Greedy Bourgeois, the Honest Worker, the Radical Leader, the Innocent Orphan, etc. Epstein may have intended more for these people, but no matter. In a talmudic novel, characters probably should be a little wooden. Stiff joints keep the arguments neat; flesh and blood gum up the riposte.

This goes for the principal character, I.C. Trumpelman, who is practically a moral riposte unto himself. Trumpelman is a medical quack and insurance embezzler who, under Nazi rule, becomes puppet leader of the Judenrat. *He* knows what to do when the Nazis demand 50 Jews for "the farms": give them 50 Jews. Why? To save the rest of the community and especially to save the poor helpless orphans under his care; or perhaps to save himself. Either way, he has neither doubts nor scruples.

"My hands are bloody," Trumpelman says to the more qualmish Jewish leaders. "My feet are bloody. My eyes are closed with blood. If your hands are clean, it's because mine are dirty! I have no conscience! That's why your conscience is clear!" Bloody hands and no conscience have a way of making a man powerful. Trumpelman becomes so powerful that his picture appears on the ghetto's stamps and paper money and on the sides of buildings. Some benighted Jews worship him as a messiah. The messiah responds by directing the Jewish police to round up haul after haul of victims and drag them to the waiting trains.

Epstein appreciates the awfulness of this, and in case some morally retarded reader should miss the point, he sketches an altogether putrid picture of Trumpelman and the Hypocritical Rabbi ordering the Nazi soldiers to fire on a column of rebelling Jewish workers. Nothing banal about evil here. Epstein's sympathies plainly lie with those rebelling workers and especially with their leaders, the radical partisans of the curiously-named Edmund Trilling Brigade (Edmund Trilling? Epstein explains that the partisans adopt this name in memory of a martyred tailor: no one wants to confess to fantasizing a proletarian uprising led by a literary critic). But sympathies aside, Epstein puts little faith in the practicality of his Trilling-ite rebels, just as if they really were a bunch of critics.

The truth is, he can't help wondering whether Trumpelman's combination of cowardice and villainy might not be the only alternative left to the Jews. Trumpelman's ghetto avoids extinction longer than any other ghetto in Europe, he says; whereas look what happened to Warsaw. And if asserting this bit of information seems too pat a defense of Trumpelman's indefensible deeds, Epstein parachutes in a Red Army scout to offer the same argument. Trumpelman, and not the partisans, the Red Army man says, may turn out to be the real hero of Jewish survival.

This, of course, is a dreadful thought. One can grant that a brief for Trumpelman and for all the Trumpelmans of the Nazi era might conceivably lurk within the realm of reasonable arguments, but it is not an attractive thing to consider. It is far pleasanter and probably much more sensible to mull over any number of other contentions on the subject, ranging from the Torah-influenced to the Rosa Luxemburg-influenced. Still, Epstein has held his nose and dredged up the nasty questions—the questions of Jewish blame and the degree to which Nazism dirtied its victims—and for this reason, I suppose, Terence Des Pres calls the book in a jacket blurb "the best novel yet written about the Holocaust" and a "turning point in our common effort to face the unspeakable." Actually, there have been some other, rather different novels that have also wondered in a sophisticated fashion about guilt and blame: I think especially of Richard Elman's Holocaust trilogy, which someone ought to bring out in paperback. But Des Pres has a point. Epstein's courage and ambitions are certainly large.

I don't mean to reduce the novel to a thesis on Nazis and Jews. In his marvelous short story, "The Steinway Quintet," Epstein demonstrated an interesting technique of elevating colorful details—snatches of braggadocio and

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reminiscence, snapshots of celebrities—into a method of composition, which he uses to advantage in extended form here. The piling of detail enables him to move supplely from pathos to comedy to horror. It also allows him to indulge a taste for the non-sequitor, which slips out of control only when he falls for the current literary fad of telling stories within stories. No question, though, that in the end the success of his book rests on the drama of the desperate debates it recounts. The book provokes thought, but above all, anxiety, which testifies to its strength.

Paul Berman

Paul Berman has contributed to *TNR, Harper's, The Nation, The Village Voice* and other magazines.

Chamber Music
by Doris Grumbach

(E.P. Dutton; $8.95)

Chamber Music owes its title and epigraph to James Joyce's first published collection of poems. The choice is apt. There's a certain lilting lyricism here and a prissy fin-de-siècle sense to the double entendre—the diseased male protagonist relieves himself in a chamber pot. More importantly, he is a composer and pianist, and music is present throughout. Most importantly perhaps, and as Carolyn Maclaren, the 90-year-old narrator, declares at novel's end: "Asked to write the history of a man and institution, I have managed to produce merely a sketch of the chamber of one heart. Like Robert, I see, I am a miniaturist."

This miniature, however, feels chock-full. Born in the year of the Centennial Exposition, Carolyn travels from Boston to Frankfurt and back, then settles down in Saratoga Springs. Such notables as Lillian Russell and Nicholas Murray Butler cross the page-stage, while Debussy and Liszt wait in the wings. Ms. Grumbach's acknowledgment suggests what a quick glance at Grove's Dictionary will confirm: the career of Robert Glencoe Maclaren is based at no great remove on that of the American composer Edward Alexander MacDowell, and the farm in Saratoga is a kind of amalgam of Yaddo and the MacDowell Colony itself.

"Why do I write this foolishness?" asks Caroline. "It is hardly enough to know that a woman was born and lived and married and, in time, died. It seems somehow important to record, beyond the vital statistics, what she yearned for and was refused, what she imagined and did not realize." As a "record, beyond the vital statistics," *Chamber Music* is convincing indeed. The doughty dame who pens these lines, rejecting the offer of secretarial help, elects to write of "what seems real: disappointments, despairs, rare intense joys and even rarer loves. And finally, for us all, the omnipresent aloneness of our lives." Breaking an ancient habit of reticence, she reveals that her husband died in 1906 of syphilis, that their seeming intimacy was false, that her one true passion was for his nurse, also long-dead but whose "memory for me has grown, reached up, covered and supported the rest of my life."

Much of the shock value of the sexual revelations—Virginia Maclaren's incestuous love for her son, the homosexual affair between Robert and his close friend Churchill Weeks, the cleansing love of Carolyn and Anna Baehr—seems coy. "Nowadays a relationship such as Anna and I had may be openly declared. Women who love as we loved are called freely by the name of the isle inhabited by the Greek poetess." And the clarion call rings hollow, or in a minor key. The dying Anna asks:

> *. . . 'Carrie. Where is God?'*
> *'God. What do you mean? The priest, do you mean the priest? Do you want me to call the priest?'*
> *'Cold,' she said. 'God. Carrie.'*
> *And she died.*

The problem with this voice is that it's at a third remove—remembered long after the fact by a nonagenarian not the author. So it's difficult to know with what degree of seriousness we're meant to receive such a message, and where to locate belief: is the juxtaposition of "god" and "Carrie" intentional, and on whose part? Similarly, are we meant to construe Caroline's ignorance of her husband's condition as foolish, innocent or syphiliphobic? She's telling us this tale, after all, a good 60 years after she found out the facts.

photo of Doris Grumbach by Nancy Crampton

Yet such lapses are few and the accomplishments many. The novel never falters in its feel for period or place, and Ms. Grumbach writes with real tact. In scene after scene—an amateur soprano straining for an aria, an old man fashioning birdhouses for those birds that fail to migrate, a young woman planting horsehair to keep fruit trees free from pests—she manages to make us hear the difficult music of grace.

Nicholas Delbanco

Nicholas Delbanco's most recent novel is *Sherbrookes* (William Morrow).

Coming:

Interview with John Hawkes.

•

C. Vann Woodward on *The Confederacy.*

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Suttree
by Cormac McCarthy

(Random House; $12.95)

Cormac McCarthy's fourth novel is rife with violence and perversity. The story is macabre, the language strident and ruthlessly explicit, the characters seamy—they belong to the underworld of the dispossessed. *Suttree* is a neo-gothic novel, appalling in its insistent concentration on the grotesque, in its frank portrayal of the unspeakable. Like its 18th-century gothic predecessors, *Suttree* exposes a fragmented existence in which old beliefs and social structures are no longer secure.

The setting is Knoxville, Tennessee, in the early 1950s; the hero, a restless and enigmatic loner, makes his living as a fisherman. Two seething entities, the river and the city, circumscribe his life, each harboring peculiar forms of malevolence. *Suttree* opens with a suitably foreboding interior monologue. We are prepared for the desolate landscape we are entering by a ponderous narrative voice:

> *We are come to a world within the world. In these alien reaches, these maugre sinks and interstitial wastes that the righteous see from carriage and car another life dreams. Illshapen or black or deranged, fugitive of all order, strangers in everyland.*

It is here that Suttree makes his home for two years.

From the first pages of the novel, when a bloated body is dragged from the river, to one of the closing scenes, when Suttree returns to his houseboat after a prolonged absence and discovers a maggot-infested corpse in his bed, decay and death obsess him. "Death is what the living carry with them. A state of dread, like some uncanny foretaste of a bitter memory. But the dead do not remember and nothingness is not a curse. Far from it." Death and memory, guilt and family bonds mingle confusedly in his imagination. In a visit to his aunt, she compels him to sit down and examine the family photograph album:

> *The old musty album with its foxed and crumbling paper seemed to breathe a reek of the vault, turning up one by one these dead faces with their wan and loveless gaze out toward the spinning world, masks of incertitude before the cold glass eye of the camera or recoiling before this celluloid immortality or faces simply staggered into gaga by the sheer velocity of time. Old distaff kin coughed up out of the vortex, thin and cracked and macled and a bit redundant. . . . I am, I am. An artifact of prior races.*

He has fled to the river to escape his marriage, his heritage, to seek a kind of oblivion. Instead he is drawn into the city's subculture of the unemployed and homeless, the haunt of deviants, drunks, ragmen and whores. They have their own peculiar demands to make of him, and his involvement in their sordid lives gradually undermines his original stance of noncommittal solitude and self-sufficiency. The novel's moral is heavily Christian. McCarthy takes his hero through some moments of extreme deprivation—cold, ravenous hunger, total isolation and a nearly fatal spell with typhoid fever—forcing him to learn a measure of humility and to accept the stubborn fact of mortality.

Although McCarthy's convoluted style can be as oppressive as his themes, he uses language powerfully. His imagery, repellant though it may be, is rich and tactile. The dialogue, in contrast to some of the labored descriptive passages, is pointed, wry and credible. He reveals the idiosyncracies that are the essence of his characters in scenes of fantastic audacity. We first meet Harrogate, Suttree's scrawny adolescent sidekick, in a moonlit watermelon patch, where an outraged farmer catches him with his pants down—violating the melons. Weird Leonard begs Suttree's assistance in disposing secretly of his father's body, so that the family welfare payments won't be cut:

> *Well Leonard if he's dead he's dead. You can't keep him in the back room and make like . . .*
>
> *Leonard's finger traced along the top of the table through the water pooled off the frozen mug. He didn't look up.*
>
> *I mean he won't keep with hot weather coming on. Suttree smiling, smile slowly fading. Leonard gave him a funny look and went back to scribbling in the water.*
>
> *Leonard.*
>
> *Yeah.*
>
> *When did he die?*
>
> *Well. He sat erect and rolled his shoulders. Well, he died . . .*
>
> *Yeah, you said. When?*
>
> *Last December.*

And in perhaps the most outlandish scene in the novel, the city's resident witch lures Suttree into her wretched lair to tell his fortune and proceeds to drug and rape him—a bizarre twist to the stock gothic device of locking a maiden in a crypt where she is molested by a demented monk.

There are many such scenes of surreal horror in the novel, too many. Some succeed in creating a queasy fascination with McCarthy's "world beyond all fantasy"; others are gratuitous indulgences of the author. The book is saved by McCarthy's startling sense of humor; the scenes involving Harrogate and his zany schemes to make some fast money are amusing and oddly touching. They relieve what would otherwise be an intolerable dose of sin and retribution, fear, guilt and rage. And Suttree is an absorbing hero with emotional and intellectual depth. But ultimately this is a cruel, unscrupulous novel. You'll put it down feeling tainted and abused along with Suttree and all of his doomed fellows.

Dorothy Wickenden

Brief Reviews

Toscanini
by Harvey Sachs

(Lippincott; $15)

Harvey Sachs has rescued Arturo Toscanini from his ignorant idolators. This excellent biography, originally published in England, avoids all the usual journalese about a demigod with no human failings but poor eyesight and a dreadful temper one wrong note could trigger, whose 68 years of conducting were one continuous triumph made possible by a photographic memory. Sachs makes Toscanini's almost superhuman achievements appear all the more treasurable by revealing that he, too, was a man with foibles (gossip, insatiable philandering) and even some musical failings (dismaying programming, an inability to grasp *Figaro* or *Don Giovanni*); he endured either spiritual torment from long stretches of inactivity or physical torture from a rheumatic right shoulder.

Sachs is not indulging in melodrama but revealing true narrative skill by opening his book with a royalist police report about the elder Toscanini's secret meeting with *garabaldini* in Parma. The son was a revolutionary, too, and he

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succeeded far better than most at overthrowing a tyranny—in this case, the one of sloth, indifference and self-indulgence that had oppressed composers by licensing the worst in performers and audiences.

Sachs's scholarly sifting of letters, diaries, contracts and documents (including transcripts of phone conversations bugged by Mussolini's goons) filters out some ingratiating trivia from the Toscanini file. It pains me to report that the story about his putting *on* his hat to Richard Strauss did not pass. Fortunately, Sachs replaces such paste gems with valuable discoveries, spotted by his trained musician's eye; these go far toward explaining Toscanini's uncanny ability to achieve a resilient, singing line while balancing unified masses of delicate detail. Here is the French conductor, Louis Fourestier, describing a 1927 rehearsal of the *allegretto* from Beethoven's Seventh:

> *After he . . . achieved the* diminuendo *in the same gradation from each player, he said to the first oboe: 'Your note—your E—make it sing! It's a melody!* One *note, a melody . . .* That *was genius!'*

To reveal the man possessed by the genius, Sachs quotes his letters, his descriptions of his dreams weeks before his death and—most moving of all—his berating of the NBC Symphony:

> E passione, dolore—*sorrow, passion,* ENTUSIASMO—ma *no SLEEP when you play! Put* entusiasmo, *like me! I don't enjoy to conduct—no, no, I 'ate to conduct, I 'ATE!! Because I suffer too much*—TROPPO! [*Then, disarmingly:*] *What—you look at me? Why . . . you think I am crazy? No, no* [*Pause to find the right English word.*] *Sensitive, yes! Don't look at me in this way.*

Senility and corporate greed were soon to spare him further agony at the service of his fanatical idealism. Within a few years, RCA's General Sarnoff disbanded the NBC Symphony as a needless expense—possibly after having fired Toscanini like any other salaried minion. Sachs is uncharacteristically indecisive about whether the dismissal or disbanding came first. Otherwise, his book provides a feast of facts. It is a worthy tribute to a man who let no detail escape him as he blazed a trail to unobtainable goals.

Harris Green

Harris Green is an editor who writes on music and theater.

Herman Hesse: Pilgrim of Crisis by Ralph Freedman

(Pantheon Books; $15)

In this sympathetic biography, Ralph Freedman, director of graduate studies in the department of comparative literature at Princeton, rightly points out that the Hesse who became a cult figure here in the 1960s was a Hesse transformed by interpretations that portrayed him as a psychedelic searcher, a rites-of-passage prophet, an ahistorical chronicler of journeys of the soul. Freedman reminds us that Hesse has enjoyed several surges of popularity, and also that he was viewed quite differently by German readers of the 1960s, for whom he was a part of the literary establishment rather than a mystic teacher.

The book is exhaustive, using Hesse's letters and diaries as evidence of his method of weaving both the traumatic and quotidian events of his life "in such a way that allowed them to portray many of the dilemmas and historic crises of his time." But it is also exhausting, minutely documenting all of Hesse's psychic and physical ailments. It suffers, moreover, from a serious lack of line-by-line editing. At one point, successive paragraphs begin "The next day, a drizzling Monday. . ." and "The next morning, a gray Monday. . . . "

To Freedman's credit, he thoroughly discusses all the events in Hesse's life that found themselves reshaped in the novels, and brings to light the transitions from one book to the next. But though Freedman explains the concessions Hesse made to popularity—"the gentle balance of [social and political] critique and attractive lyricism that ensured his success"—one is hesitant to accept his assumption that the major books get better in chronological sequence, as Hesse moved from crisis to crisis and worked out his need and fear of isolation, his striving for independence and his longing for approval. Freedman ignores how Hesse's compromises made for the sake of popularity adversely affected his stylistic achievement and overall development, for Hesse often changed what might have been truly original into what is too often simplistic, nostalgic or solipsistic.

Freedman is excellent on Hesse's childhood, his three marriages, his psychoanalysis and relationship with Jung, his attraction to the East, his drinking and self-pity, his pose as the outsider and lonely sufferer; but he lets Hesse off the hook too easily, especially when discussing Hesse's ambivalance during the World Wars. Hesse was genuinely against violence, but he was nationalistic, mainly because, as the evidence here attests, he was afraid of losing his readers. (When his German Jewish publisher was forced by the Nazis to sell his firm, Hesse chose to stay with the German company despite the fact that his original publisher set up business in exile. Hesse didn't want to antagonize the Nazis; his books were eventually banned anyway.)

This biography superbly integrates Hesse's troubled life and his works, and it illuminates the nature of Hesse's appeal and his successes; but by sidestepping any hard judgment of the aesthetic quality of the major works, it fails to make its case for Hesse as an artist.

Robert R. Harris

Robert R. Harris is the former book review editor of *Bookviews.*

Correspondence, from page 3

deceit and fraud [are private persons also justified, only somewhat less so?], but he is also expected to show greater concern for the common good than a private individual." Considerate! Public officials have some kind of "moral immunity," yet are "still ultimately responsible." Untie that knot, please. Finally, the best public men "are those who preserve a sense of reluctance about doing the 'morally disagreeable'—[something like the Grand Inquisitor who takes on himself the sins of mankind, no doubt] men who can do what is necessary but with a continuing awareness of the moral cost involved." Enough said.

So much for real politiks, American style.

Isadore Traschen
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Troy, New York

P.S. An excellent issue, by the way. Thanks especially for the piece on Mr. Rockefeller . . . much needed; though he could justify himself, following Ms. Hook's argument.

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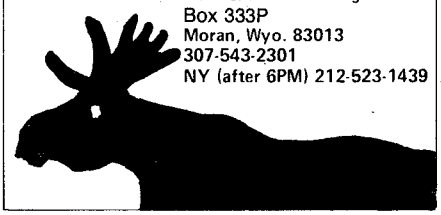

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Washington Diarist

Public Relations

During a generally bad month for the Vietnamese, a ray of sunshine broke through the clouds late in February. Someone from the *New York Times* called up Dean Rusk to ask his opinion of events in his favorite part of the world. Rusk replied, "I've personally exhausted my capacity to be concerned about Vietnam." Surely the people of Vietnam can only regret that this newfound indifference was so late in coming. The *Times* elicited some choice comments from other Vietnam-era celebrities, reached at various mental institutions around the country (e.g., the Lyndon Johnson School of Public Affairs). Graham Martin, the model for Ronald Reagan's proposed new Seal of the United States ("an ambassador with a flag under his arm climbing up the escape helicopter"), took up the white man's burden once more and commented on recent developments in the country where he once represented the US: "I don't think anyone who understands the Asian psychology is surprised." Students of the American psychology are puzzling over Walt Rostow's delirious prognosis: "I expect a lot of trouble in that area, simply because there is no effectively stabilizing power, which we were as long as we were there." Clearly this man has not achieved a desirable Rusk-like serenity and is in need of some stabilizing himself. I suggest massive bombing with Valium.

Sometimes literature can sweep the reader into a completely different world, while still casting light on the reader's own. I felt this way upon sitting down with my January/February issue of the *National Notary*, a glossy magazine put out for the notary public readership. Notaries public are the people you must pay to put their stamps on various formal documents. Notaries have their own concerns, such as the National Notary Association Achievement Award, for "that individual who has done the most in 1978 to advance the interests of the American Notary," and an "historic" NNA "conference and Hawaiian excursion" to take place in May, after which notaries will "return to the mainland—suntanned and better equipped to deal with notarial problems" (not to mention a nice business expense tax deduction). But notaries cannot ignore the pressing social problems of the day. Indeed the cover story of the current issue faces such a problem foursquare: "Notarizing for the Handicapped." The editors pose the question, "What is the proper notarization procedure for someone with broken hands? Or *no* hands? [Especially important for when Islamic rule reaches California.] For someone with polio, paralysis, or amnesia?" It may seem crass to deride notaries for expressing concern about the less fortunate, but in fact the advice from notary control is to refuse to notarize a document for anyone who can't meet all the ridiculous ceremonial requirements of swearing to the contents, signing in the presence of the notary, etc. Notaries are urged to harden their hearts: "Notarizing for the disabled is not the . . . excruciating moral dilemma that many Notaries make of it . . . , *IF* the notary can train himself to view it as a *notarial situation only*. . . ." The best thing notaries could do for the handicapped, and everybody else, would be to melt down their seals for wheelchairs and abandon the whole archaic practice. But organizations like the National Notary Association exist to prevent exactly this development.

After something under a minute of tortured moral reflection, I accepted my first junket last month: two weeks in Germany, courtesy of the West German government. The alleged subject of this "study tour" was the strains placed on civil liberties in a democratic society by the need to crack down on terrorism, and the exquisite sensitivity with which the Federal Republic of Germany is handling this problem. A few publications, mostly in Europe, have expressed doubts; hence the junket. Among journalists, there are two socially acceptable attitudes about this sort of invitation, but I have been able to generate neither. One is a fastidious refusal to accept any freebies at all. This posture seems to be most common among those with large expense accounts and travel budgets of their own to shore up the backbone. There are reporters who haven't paid for their own lunches in years, who would sooner die than let a lobbyist grab the check. Since the editor of *TNR* was unwilling to subsidize my financial virginity in this manner, I decided it wasn't worth saving. The other permissible attitude toward freebies is a businesslike indifference to the question of who is picking up the tab. We are men and women of the world, after all, and cannot be bought for the mere price of a few champagne-sodden days on the Riviera acquiring valuable information about the French semiconducter industry, or a round trip by Concorde to Bahrain, where there are developments in the arts that should interest any serious observer of world affairs. Experienced business travelers even insist that these duties can get quite tedious. But I am not so well traveled that a trip to Europe—even to Germany in the middle of winter—is not appealing. And I'm enough of a skinflint that the thought of all those hotel rooms and restaurant meals coming for free was simply intoxicating. Frankly, for the whole two weeks my heart was filled with gratitude to the German government. Readers of my upcoming report on the deep respect for civil liberties in West Germany, and the perfidious accusations against it by communist agents and dupes, can judge whether gratitude has dulled the edge of my objectivity.

Public relations is a funny business. Somebody in the West German PR apparatus apparently thought it would be a good idea to import a bunch of foreign journalists and show them what a freedom-loving and democratic country West Germany is. But whoever it was gave little thought to the impossibility of demonstrating the *absence* of fascist tendencies. The Germans didn't seem to know what to do with us once they got us there. We were shepherded in and out of various government offices, where various officials amiably offered us coffee and fruit juice and civics lectures about the incredibly complex German constitution. One day in Stuttgart we were driven two hours into the countryside to see a model youth prison where juvenile criminals have keys to their rooms, color televisions, etc. I don't know whether the purpose of this expedition was to suggest the absence of concentration camps in the new Germany or just to keep us busy for the day. We duly trotted through the workshops and dormitories, asked questions and snapped pictures. The Germans seemed pleased. After the tour one of my fellow junketeers, a dour and—I had thought—humorless man from the daily newspaper of the Finish Communist Party, uttered his first words to me of the trip: "I poot zeez pictures in my papoor, unt I call zem, 'voorking class housing near Shtootgart.'"

M.E.K.

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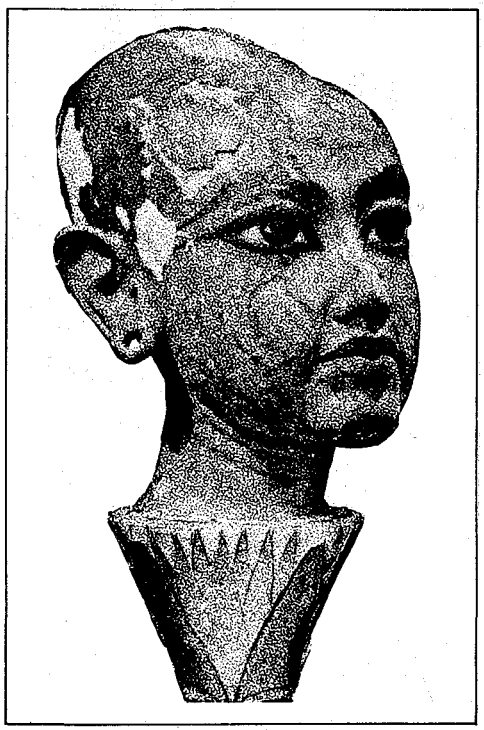

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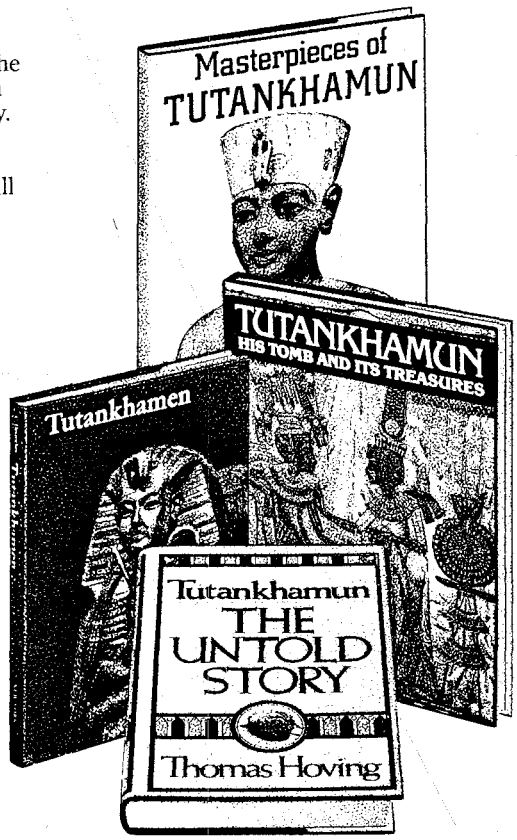

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